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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[VANA SAT THERE, CALM AND DRY-EYED, AS HER AUNT BROKE THE NEWS!]

## THE CURSE OF THE LESTERS.

## CHAPTER XI.

It wanted but a week to Christmas day. Mr. Devenish was to reach Vale Lester Vicarage the night before the festival, and so Mrs. Tempest had already begun the hospitable preparations.

She was not a covetous woman. Had David been a bad man, in spite of his wealth, she would never have welcomed him, but being what he was it must be confessed the fact of his having five thousand a year did weigh something with her.

She was but human. She had seven children. Her husband's income was precisely one-twentieth of her guest's. Only to fancy it! Vana and Mr. Devenish would be able to spend in a single month very nearly double what must last the Vicarage family a year!

Aunt Hephzibah had done her duty by Vana—or she thought so. Already she began to see bright visions of the return to be made to her.

Long visits at the sea-side for her little girls, a helping hand now and then with the boys' school bills, and, later on, a little assistance to launch them in life.

Wrapped up in these thoughts, grateful to the Providence which had found such a lover for Vana, and still more grateful to Mr. Devenish for standing even the test of hearing the history of Vana's birth, Mrs. Tempest quite forgot to be watchful of her niece's comings and goings. Things that would have been reckoned heavy faults six months ago in the little daily governess were quietly passed over in the future Mrs. Devenish. If Vana grew more absent and silent every day Aunt Hephzibah thought it natural, considering the great change coming in her life. When Dr. Stone, who had been asked to prescribe a tonic for her, said frankly her ailments were more of the mind than the body, Mrs. Tempest only concluded that she was fanciful and unsettled.

But now the time for Mr. Devenish's return drew very near. In six days he would be at Vale Lester, and it did strike Mrs. Tempest that he would find a very changed Vana from the bright-faced girl he had first met at

Whitby, or even from the maiden to whom he had offered his hand not six weeks ago.

The good lady felt quite irritable with her niece for doing her so little credit.

"Really, Vana," she said, almost snappishly, as she took a piece of sewing from the girl's hand, "I think you are too provoking. I have told you not to trouble about the needlework; but to go out, or read, or amuse yourself. I don't want Mr. Devenish to think we make you into a household drudge. I'm sure if we treated you like a regular nurse-maid you couldn't look more injured and woe-begone!"

"I don't feel injured, auntie!" said Vana, wearily, "and I would rather go on with the pinafores. Rose begins to want them."

"Rose must wait. Why don't you go out and amuse yourself?"

"I don't want to amuse myself."

"You are the very contrariest girl I ever met. A little while ago you would do anything to escape your proper duties, and go gallivanting about, but now you seem bent on working yourself to death to set Mr. Devenish against us."



Vana was spared all answer; there came a furious ring at the front door, and the servants, being both busy in the kitchen, were to open it—glad, perhaps, to escape her aunt's lecture. She was so long in remaining that Mrs. Tempest grew alarmed.

"Vana! Vana!"

Vana came slowly in, bearing in her hand one of those ominous orange-coloured envelopes that have brought trouble and dismay to so many households.

"A telegram!" exclaimed Mrs. Tempest, fairly alarmed herself, "and your uncle's out. I wonder if I had better send it after him."

"It's for me!"

"For you! Why don't you open it?"

"I think I am afraid!" and something like a sob escaped the poor girl as she sank back into a chair.

"Nonsense!" said her aunt, practically; "give it to me, and I'll open it for you. You'll never find out what it's about just by staring at the envelope."

But when Mrs. Tempest had read the message her face was as grave as Vana's.

"Martha Robinson, the White House, Sandstone, to Mrs. Tempest, Vale Lestor."

"My master is dying, come at once."

Vana sat there, her face calm and dry-eyed, as her aunt broke the news.

And how bitterly she reproached herself for prying that anything might break off her engagement. He was dying! The man who had loved her better than anything else in life. Who, knowing she had nothing but a mere friendly liking to give him in return, had yet been willing to endow her with his master's best love and all that fortune had given him.

Dying—dying! The words of the telegram seemed to burn themselves into Vana's brain. Mrs. Tempest, ever practical, sent one of the children for her husband, and then laying one hand on Vana's shoulder, said in no kindly tone—

"You must go and put on your things, Vana. If you are quick we shall just catch the five o'clock train."

"Where?"

Mrs. Tempest thought grief had half-blinded her.

"I shall take you to Sandstone at once, Vana. I can only hope we shall be in time to get to York tonight. We can sleep there, and go on to Whitley by the first train in the morning."

It was no light matter for her to prepare to leave her house at a moment's notice the very day before her boys were coming home for their Christmas holidays, but she never hesitated.

David Dovenish was dying, and he had asked for his fiancée, therefore Vana must be taken to him at any cost.

The Vicar came in while his wife was in the thick of her preparations. She had everything to do, for Vana sat like a statue, utterly unable to rouse herself or take part in the stir around her.

Poor child! Her mind was full of a terrible doubt. If David died, was she his murderer, since she had hoped and prayed for anything in the world to break off her engagement?

Her uncle came up to her gently and took her hand, saying kindly—

"This is a terrible blow for you, my poor child."

But Vana never answered; she only looked into his face with a blank, stony expression in her beautiful eyes. She seemed frozen into despair.

Fortunately there was no need for her to think of or plan the journey. Occasional visits to Whitley had made her aunt quite familiar with the route, the first part, which was a complicated one, consisting of getting to York—and involved two or three changes, after which all was plain sailing.

The horses and dogs were confided to the village solicitor's messengers. The children received many injunctions to be good, and finally the Vicar borrowed his churchwarden's chaise to drive the travellers to Dereham station,

where they caught the train comfortably, if that word could possibly apply to anything done by anyone in Vana's frame of mind.

"Stay as long as he needs you," whispered the Vicar to his wife. "We will manage to get on somehow."

It was a miserable journey. Poor Mrs. Tempest, in her hard corner of the third-class carriage, was tormented by a hundred anxieties as to the well-being of her house and children, and Vana was far from a satisfactory companion.

She never spoke at all. She uttered no word of thanks to her aunt for the latter's undertaking such a journey. She would not answer when Mrs. Tempest detailed what time they should reach Whitley. She shed no tear, made no lament, and poor Mrs. Tempest felt she might as well have expected companionship and conversation from a stone statue.

But the Vicar's wife was a resolute woman, and she bore her penance, for such the journey was, bravely.

By dint of questioning the guard and porters she discovered that instead of sleeping at York she might catch the night train which passed through somewhere after three, and would take her without further change to Whitley, arriving about five.

"Such a nice time," said the good woman to Vana. "We shall get to Sandstone a little before ten."

But it was of no use, Vana was speechless. She swallowed the cup of tea her aunt procured for her at York, but the sandwich which accompanied it she remained fractionally away.

She leaned back in her corner for the rest of the journey, and Mrs. Tempest, hoping she was asleep, indulged in a good refreshing slumber herself so that she felt much better when they reached Whitley.

Mrs. Clifford was there to meet them. The vicar had telegraphed to her from Dereham, and the kind creature had driven over in her pony carriage that she might at least spare them the three miles drive in a hired fly; besides, she had the particulars of the accident to relate.

It was an accident—no illness and no preventable cause.

Mr. Dovenish had been thrown from his horse while hunting the day before. He was picked up at once and carried home.

The doctor was soon in attendance, but from the first he gave no hope.

Poor David's one cry was for Vana, and the housekeeper (who was in her master's confidence respecting his intended marriage) had on her own responsibility sent off the telegram which brought Vana and her aunt to York-shire.

Mrs. Clifford did not think it necessary to add that the ladies at the Ferns were in London, and would probably return at once.

She guessed that they would receive Vana with warm courtesy and less good-will, but she knew the old housekeeper would pay all respects to the poor young creature, so she thought it needless to mention Mrs. Morton and her mother.

An old woman with white hair received Vana in the hall of the White House. Her eyes were red with weeping.

She had nursed David Dovenish as a child; she had hoped soon to welcome his bride, and by-and-by to nurse their children, and lo! he lay dying, and the beautiful girl he loved would never bear his name! No wonder she could hardly find words in which to greet poor Vana.

But Vana's face seemed to change now. Her expression grew less stony, and her old wistful eager look came back to her as she took the old woman's worn hand in hers, and said, brokenly—

"Only tell me he is alive?"

"Oh, yes, my poor child! I beg your pardon—ma'am, I should have said, The master's alive, and he will know you; but you

are only just in time. The doctor doubts if he will last till noon."

"Please take me to him."

Mrs. Tempest had not much tact, but she was a woman, and a kindly one.

She made no attempt to follow Vana as she walked hurriedly after the old housekeeper.

Another servant came forward and took the vicar's wife into the dining-room, where breakfast was laid out, and the lady managed to make a substantial meal in spite of the shadow that hung over the house.

Mrs. Robinson paused at the threshold of David's door.

"The doctor's there, but he'll come away now. You won't be afraid to be there alone?"

Vana shook her head.

She was just conscious, a kind-looking old man passed her with a great pity written on his face, then, in another moment, she was sitting by David's bedside, with her hand clasped in his.

There was nothing alarming in his appearance. The injuries were chiefly internal, and he looked so like his old self that Vana could hardly realise he was dying.

The very suddenness of the mischief prevented its traces showing in his face. There was no time for it to grow thin or pallid, and he suffered no pain.

The injury was deadly to the spine, and though the consequences were swift and fatal, very little suffering accompanied them.

"My darling!"

He bent over him suddenly, the burning tears she had kept back before filling her eyes, and flowing down her cheeks.

He was dying, and he loved her; perhaps no one else in the whole world would ever love her as he did.

"Oh, David!" said his poor child, with a bitter sob, "why can't I be instead of you? Your life is bright and useful, and mine is worthless! I don't need it!"

"Don't, Vana!" he said, weakly. "Child, you hurt me! Dear, it is not as hard as you think. My life as you see, is bright. I have never known a sorrow. I could not expect things always to go well with me. Better, far, that I should go now before the evil days."

"Then you don't mind?"

He held her hand closely in his own. He looked on her face with undying love shining in his eyes.

"Only for you, my darling! Only for you, Vana, child! I can be thankful now you never loved me! You will be sorry for me; but my death won't make you desolate."

"David," sobbed the poor girl, "forgive me. I ought never to have listened to you last month. I have known for weeks now I could never make you happy. I have even wished anything would happen to set me free; but, oh! I never meant this. When I got the telegram I felt as if I had murdered you. Can you forgive me, dear? Heaven knows I shall never forgive myself!"

"You must never think of it again, my darling. There is no need of such a word as forgiveness between you. When you think of me, Vana—and I hope you won't forget me quite—only remember that I loved you better than all else, and that the thought of you and the hope of bringing you to my home made my last weeks happier than any other part of my life. You must never think you wronged me, my darling. You were quite true; you told me you had no love to give me, and I was content to take you even so; ay, more than content—thankful."

Vana was crying bitterly. The dying man strove to soothe her.

"This must not be, sweetheart. Don't you see that this death is the kindest thing that could have happened. I shall never have had to give you up, Vana. Never have had to feel I wronged you by taking your life with mine. You have made me very happy, dear, and I know you'll not forget me."

"Never, never while I live."

"Some day," went on the dying man,



simply, "when the old wound is healed, Vana, you will find out that you can love again. I came to you too soon, and yet I believe I could have won your heart in time. Well, my darling, when any lover comes you feel you can esteem him happy. I can't bear to think of you as lonely and desolate, my little girl. You were made to be the sunshine of some home, and I know you will be."

She answered him nothing. Once or twice she tried to speak, but a lump in her throat choked back the words; but she watched him with a wonderful affection shining in her violet eyes, as though only now that she was losing him did she realize the worth of his noble heart.

"Vana."

She looked into his face, and read there a strange, wistful entreaty. Was it her fancy, or had his voice really grown so faint that she had to bend over him to catch the words?

"I wish you'd kiss me, my darling once before I go away!"

She stooped over him then, and pressed her lips to his. It was the first and last caress she ever gave him; for with it his spirit fled. The still, quiet form upon the bed was not David Devenish.

He had gone to the far-off land where partings are unknown, and Vana Tempest was alone.

It was all over.

Mrs. Robinson had come in and found Vana sitting with her hand locked in her dead lover's. She said afterwards it was a sight to melt a stone.

"He does not need you now, my dearie," she said, gently, then as Vana raised her weary, aching eyes questioningly, she added, "the master has gone, my dear young lady, and you must let me take you away."

Not for worlds would she have suffered anyone to disturb the girl her master had loved, the young creature she had hoped so soon to welcome as her mistress.

Mrs. Robinson knew perfectly Mrs. Morton's friends would have sent her news of the accident. The widow had doubtless slept at York, and might be expected by the first train after that which had brought Miss Tempest.

The old housekeeper had no very great legal knowledge, but she was aware her master had no nearer relations than Mrs. Morton and her mother, so she feared that at any rate until his wishes were known these ladies would take possession of the White House.

From the moment the breath went out of poor David's body the good old servant could no longer enforce her authority. She simply detested Mrs. John Devenish and her daughter, but she could not dispute their claims.

The room to which she took poor Vana was some distance from the chamber of death. The young lady's small travelling bag was already there, and a fire burnt brightly in the grate.

"Shall I ask your aunt to come to you, missie?" asked the kind old woman when she had seen Vana stretched on the sofa, "she's downstairs now talking to the doctor, but there's no doubt she'll be here in a minute."

But Vana shook her head.

"I'd rather be alone, please. I am so very tired, and I want to think."

Mrs. Robinson had known enough trouble herself to understand the desire for solitude; she folded a shawl over the poor girl tenderly, and was touched more than she could describe when Vana raised her head and looked at her.

"You have been so very kind," she whispered to the old woman, "and you loved him."

## CHAPTER XII.

DOWNSTAIRS there was less tranquillity. Dr. Gordon, a personal friend of poor David, had at once broken to Mrs. Tempest the state of affairs at Sandstone.

"It's been the wonder of the place for two years, the efforts those women have made to catch the poor fellow, and you see Mrs.

Morton is his next-of-kin. Depend upon it, they'll be here before he can turn round. I only hope for your niece's sake he made his will."

Mrs. Tempest shook her head.

"They had been engaged for so short a time, and the whole acquaintance only dated from last August, so that I do not think any will would mention Vana. If the poor fellow has left one it was probably made before he saw her. What do you advise me to do? The child is almost worn out with grief and fatigue; it is almost impossible for me to take her back to London to-day, but we could go over to Whitby, where I have a cousin."

"I wouldn't leave without seeing the poor fellow's lawyer," said Dr. Gordon, kindly. From a hint Devenish dropped to her the other day I fancy he has made a will, and that recently. Any way, Miss Tempest is his fiancée, and it seems rather like running away to remove her before his relatives arrive. I don't mind telling you they are most unpopular in this place, and they are the kind of women who would stand at nothing—that was in their way. I can't speak more plainly; but whatever rights your poor little niece has you must fight for, or they will dispute them. Ha!" as the sound of wheels came on his ear, "I believe here they come. Well, I'm thankful they are too late to disturb the poor fellow's last moments, or interrupt his meeting with poor Miss Tempest. They can't hurt him now, and if they attempt to be aggressive to you I hope you'll allow me to constitute myself your champion. I can stay here another hour, and that will be ample time to see what their intentions are."

The blinds had been already lowered in token of the trouble that had fallen on the house; but Mrs. Morton probably did not notice this, for her first inquiry of the old butler was—  
"How is he now?"  
"My master died a half-an-hour ago," announced poor Robinson, huskily.  
"Poor fellow! Apart from his grief for the dead there was plenty to trouble him. He and his wife had lived at the White House for over forty years, and had hoped to end their days in the Devenish employment; but both of them would have preferred starvation to serving Mrs. Morton."

Only that brief sentence—four words; but how they changed Mrs. Morton's demeanour. It had been anxious and almost ringing, but her next speech was a haughty order, as from a thoroughly ill-bred woman to one she believes under her.

"Pay the fly and send it off; let some one go down to the cottage for our boxes. We shall not return there. Come, mother."

She gave the old lady her arm, and together they entered the White House, not as barely tolerated guests, but as mistresses. Robinson made not the slightest attempt to obey Mrs. Morton's latest. Five minutes' reflection had told him that as neither he nor his wife had intended to remain at the White House, if the widow were indeed the owner, he might as well begin his course of revolt now; besides, in his heart, he did not think his master would have left even a chance of Julia's reigning in his home.

The old man merely told the fly driver to wait the ladies' further orders, and went off to consult with his wife.

"It's a hard line, old woman," he said, sadly, "but it might be far worse. We've got the forty pounds a year the old master left us, and she's got the cottage we bought years ago. It won't be like life at the White House, but we shall get along. I'm only thinking whether we shall go now."

"Oh, no!" and the old nurse choked a sob. "We can't leave the house, Tom, while he's there. The moment the master's laid in his grave I'm ready; but however she worries (the word usually applied by her servants to Mrs. Morton), I'll put up with it rather than go while his coffin's there."

"I wish to goodness Mr. Graham'd send,"

said Tom, in a troubled tone. "A lawyer ought not to be out of town when he's wanted. There's the funeral to arrange, and heaps of things to see to, and if no one else gives orders Mrs. Morton will."

"Did you send to Mr. Graham?"

"Of course—and the answer was the old gentlemen had the gout, and the young one was in London, and expected home to-day. I've sent off Andrews to Whitby station. There must be some one to cope with that woman."

"Hush, hush! Tom," said his wife, reprovingly. "She's one of the family after all, and they do say her husband was a brave soldier."

"Brave, indeed, to marry her!"

Meanwhile the two widows made their way to the dining-room, and discovered Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Tempest in close conversation. They bowed courteously to the physician, and Julia raised her eye-glass, and scanned the strange lady more inquisitively than politely.

"What is your business, madame?" she asked, coldly. "It is hardly the time for strangers to intrude upon me, I should have thought."

Aunt Hepzibah's Scotch caution stood her in good stead. She kept perfectly silent, and left the field open for the doctor, who was quite ready to do battle in her cause.

"Mrs. Tempest had no thought of visiting you, Mrs. Morton," he rejoined, calmly. "She does not intend to call at the Ferns. Her errand is solely here, where she was summoned at your cousin's dying wish that she might bring his affianced wife to say good-bye to him."

"Affianced fiddlesticks!" said old Mrs. John Devenish, whose language when angry grew more vehement than refined. "David never was engaged in his life, and I'll warrant this woman has trumped up some story that's imposed on you, doctor!"

"You can ask Mrs. Robinson or any of the household," replied her adversary, "and they will tell you preparations have been made for nearly a month for the reception of the bride. Had all gone well, my poor friend hoped to have been married in January to a young lady you already know, Miss Tempest, niece of my friend here."

"I don't believe a word of it!" said Mrs. Morton.

"All a string of falsehoods!" agreed her mother. "Dear David would never have taken such a serious step without consulting us."

But this was more than Mrs. Tempest could stand.

Rising, she drew herself to her full height, and without as much as a glance at the two ladies, addressed herself pointedly to the doctor.

"I thank you kindly, Dr. Gordon, for your courtesy, and I shall be much obliged if you would tell me how to procure a carriage to drive to Whitby? My cousin, Mrs. Clifford, will, I am sure, shelter Vana and myself until the child is strong enough to go home. I have a strong attachment to Mr. Devenish, but I do not think I should consult his wishes by exposing his destined wife to insult, as I must do if we continued here!"

"I cannot ask you to remain," he rejoined, gravely, "but I wish you could have seen Mr. Graham. I feel certain you will find poor Devenish has not neglected his betrothed's interests."

"He had no power over anything," said Mrs. Morton, spitefully. "Everything was entailed, and passed to the heir-at-law. I knew myself that David's father inherited the property from a cousin; and, of course, everything passes to me now in the same way."

She re-entranced herself a little more comfortably in the easy chair as she spoke, as though to intimate not only that it belonged to her, but that she considered Mrs. Tempest and her champion as intruders; but the doctor was not in the least discomposed.

"Your cousin's lawyer will be here to-night, Mrs. Morton," he said, dryly. "Until you have had an interview with Mr. Graham I should advise you not to make too sure of anything."

The fair Julia tossed her head.

"No one can dispose of entailed property."

"No one. But I happen to know that poor Devenish's elder brother joined with his father to cut off the entail. The luckless scapegrace died before the old squire, and David succeeded, as a matter of course. But the fact remained from that day the entail was destroyed. The White House might be bequeathed to a stranger."

The two widows turned yellow with a sudden fear, but Julia quickly recovered herself.

"My poor cousin had known Miss Tempest barely four months; so, if he has left a will, it was probably made years before he saw her."

Mrs. Tempest rose. She was feeling the embarrassment of her position keenly.

"I really think," she said with quiet dignity, "but speaking chiefly to the doctor, 'I had better take Vana away. I should not like her to hear such cruel innuendoes.'"

Mrs. John Devenish interposed. She very rarely interfered with her daughter, but perhaps she was by nature more cautious and far-seeing than Julia.

It flashed on her suddenly that if David had made a will, and not remembered them, they would be too poor to afford to make enemies, so she turned to the vicar's wife with a manner that was meant to be gracious.

"I think it would be more comfortable for us all if you saw Mr. Graham. You must forgive the excitement of my daughter's grief. She was devotedly attached to my nephew. If you and Miss Tempest like to remain the night at the White House you will be welcome."

So a kind of armed neutrality was established.

The doctor departed, leaving the three ladies seated at lunch.

Poor Vana was reported by the housekeeper as too overcome to leave her room.

Mrs. Tempest was not a mercenary woman or a covetous one, but Vana was a burden to her.

The loss of the girl's brilliant prospects was a very bitter blow. It really seemed to her aunt worth while to conciliate David's relations.

If they came into possession of all his property they might give back a few crumbs to her who would soon have been mistress of all; or, at worst, they might be powerful friends, so she did not refuse the olive branch tardily offered, but broke bread with the two widows, and listened patiently to their stories of their own grandeur, and the great comfort and consolation they had always been to their kinsman, David Devenish.

There was something fearfully sudden about it all.

At that hour the day before Mrs. Tempest had been making plans for David's reception when he reached Vale Lester; now he was dead, and two strange women were giving orders in the home that should have been Vana's.

Instead of sharing an income of five thousand a year the utmost she could hope for her niece was a trifling legacy, or that these ladies, remembering all she had lost, would offer her a modest allowance from the estate.

She little knew their nature if she expected aught at their hands.

They ate and drank as heartily as though the master of the house had not been lying dead. They discussed the house and its arrangements as coolly as though that still, cold frame had not been in the state bedroom above.

"I shall refurbish this room," said Mrs. Morton, composedly, as she stirred the fire. "It is terribly old-fashioned; David had no taste."

"And you must make a clean sweep of the

servants, Julia," suggested her mother, "for an idler, more worthless set never existed. David was so easily imposed on."

"I suppose we must wear crêpe, mamma? I think I shall order a sister's mourning."

"By all means, my dear. I would not grudge the poor fellow any token of respect. Crêpe for at least three months; you might leave it off when we go to London. Of course you will have a town house now, and spend the season there."

"I hope Mr. Graham won't be an age settling things," said Julia, anxiously. "Those country lawyers are so slow."

"I don't like the Grahams. They are quite second-rate people. Far better employ a London firm."

Mrs. Tempest said nothing. She was not a very sensitive woman; but all this jarred on her very much. She felt positively thankful Vana could not hear it.

Robinson brought in afternoon tea at four o'clock, and handed it round in solemn state. Before he had finished they heard the sound of an arrival, and one of the other servants, after a hurried colloquy outside, ushered in Mr. John Graham.

Mrs. Tempest saw a man of five or six-and-thirty, with a frank, honest face, and a manner not unlike David's own. She felt glad she had waited.

If poor Mr. Devenish had left Vana a legacy she felt this was the man to see it was paid to the uttermost farthing, while if there was no provision for the girl he would make the telling of the fact as little painful as he could.

All the three ladies had risen on his entrance, but he went straight to the stranger and shook her hand. She heard later he had met Dr. Gordon at Whitley station, and gleaned the state of affairs had hurried to the White House without even going to his own home.

"You must accept my warmest sympathy," he said, gravely, to Mrs. Tempest. "I knew poor Devenish well, and loved him almost as a brother. It is a terrible trial for your niece, but I am thankful to hear she was in time to see him alive."

"You seem to forget we are here, Mr. Graham," said Mrs. Morton. "Our loss must be far greater than Miss Tempest's. She had not known David four months."

The lawyer's manner changed.

"I don't consider the loss of a cousin such a terrible bereavement, madam, though of course I am aware there are few cousins like my poor friend. Did you and your mother come here to nurse him?"

"We arrived too late," said Mrs. John, with dignity. "At the station we heard poor David was no more, and so we drove on here at once that my daughter might take possession of her rights."

"And what are her rights?"

"I am well aware," said Julia, spitefully, "that you are not friendly to me, Mr. Graham, but you will hardly dare to deny I am David's heir-at-law!"

"Undoubtedly you would have been his heir-at-law had he died intestate, but his will is in my keeping, and as your name is not even mentioned in it I must inform you you have no claim to a sixpence of his property!"

Of the storm that followed Mrs. Tempest never liked to think, she told her husband it was too terrible.

The abuse, the threats, the accusations in which the two ladies indulged would have disgraced a charwoman; but Mr. Graham kept perfectly cool, and at last gained the day, and saw them—still uttering threats of vengeance—set out on their way home.

"And now," said the lawyer, drawing a long breath after his victory, "I had better tell you that Miss Tempest is poor David's sole heiress. The Clifords are named her personal guardians, and I have the honour of being the trustee to her property. I should like to meet my ward. Do you think Miss Tempest could see me to-night, or shall I call to-morrow?"

But Mrs. Tempest was certain that Vana would see him then, and requested Mrs. Robinson to go and ask her to come to them.

"She was alone with poor Mr. Devenish at the last, and I have not seen her since," she said, in explanation, "for she is so very sensitive, I did not want her to meet Mrs. Morton."

Mrs. Robinson was gone ten minutes, and when she returned her face was so full of horror Mr. Graham almost expected to hear that grief had been too much for poor Vana, and her spirit had gone to join her lover's.

(To be continued.)

## WHEN SHALL WE TWO MEET AGAIN?

—30—

### CHAPTER XXXI.

"NOT A SOUL SHALL TOUCH YOU!"

As soon as Ronald Treherne recovered from the shock given him by those few words from Mrs. Gifford he pursued his way to the Hon. Wilfred Romer's rooms.

All his anxieties were put out of his head at the first sight of the boy's eager face. It had grown even more delicate and girlish since Treherne last saw it; but there was no mistaking the hearty, loving welcome in the sweet blue eyes.

"Oh, I'm so thankful to see you," he said, almost panting with the extreme longing in his heart, as he threw his arms round Ronald's neck, and laid his fair head on his shoulder.

Treherne, touched to the quick, stooped, and kissed him as if he had been a girl, whilst the tears rushed to his eyes. There was a deep silence in the room, and then he said, brokenly,—

"You love me too much, Will, I don't half deserve it."

"Ask father! ask Hil!" the boy said, breathlessly. "Oh, you don't know what I've suffered. I thought you were dead, and that they were keeping it from me."

"You silly fellow!" stroking his hair fondly. "If I died to-day, I believe your love would call me back to-morrow!"

"Ah! if it could, I should never be in a fright again. Ronald, you don't mind, do you? but I know all about everything; Hil told me!"

"Hilda knew it!" he exclaimed, in surprise, using her Christian name unconsciously.

"Yes, somebody called you 'Ralph'! that dreadful day," shuddering, "so she guessed."

"Somebody?" said Treherne, eagerly.

"Oh! Mrs. Gifford, I suppose!" his eagerness subsiding.

"You don't mind my knowing, do you?" looking anxiously up into his face.

"I'm awfully glad that you do; then when the end comes it won't be a shock to you!" with a sweet smile.

"What do you mean?" the colour going from his cheeks as he clutched Treherne's arm nervously. "The end? There shan't be an end! You must never go away and desert me. Promise me that you won't!"

"It might come to this that I had no choice," as it passed through his mind that before many days were over he might be lodged in a prison, and he ought to prepare the boy's mind for it. "Then, if I have to go, you won't give me up, Will. When everybody else is howling against me, I may count on you to stand up for me, mayn't I?"

"Stand up for you? I should think so!" his eyes flashing. "Oh! if I were only a man!" with a sigh of irrepressible longing, as he thought of his own weakness. It was so hard to have the dauntless spirit of a St. George, and no more strength than a girl.



"You may do a great amount of good with your tongue."

"Can I? Only tell me how!" with the utmost eagerness.

"Mrs. Gifford recognised me at once, because we were great friends at the Cape; but I want you to remember," his voice very low and impressive, "that Lady Dacre was utterly deceived by my white hair. She does not know who I am to this day."

"You don't say so!" opening his eyes to their fullest extent. "Then she likes you now only because you are so nice."

"Who dares to say she likes me?" quickly, as the colour rushed into his cheeks,

"I thought she did," said the boy, with a quiet smile. "She never looked so happy as when she was dancing with you that night."

Treherne passed his hand over his forehead and drew a deep breath. The mere thought of that evening seemed to bewilder him, but he made an effort to control his thoughts.

He could not mention so delicate a subject to Lord Wildgrave or even Colonel Gordon; but it was his great object to get this innocent boy, whose young heart was pure as a girl's, to act as a shield to Lady Dacre's fair name.

It would be everything for the whole neighbourhood to know that she had never recognised him, and therefore, that they had met—not as lovers who had loved each other so sadly in the past, but as strangers—with no secret understanding between them.

"Her life had been very dull lately," he said, quietly, "and she had not danced for many months; besides, our steps went well together—that was all."

"But to think she never knew you!" looking up at Treherne's peculiar style of beauty with astonished eyes. "I bet you couldn't deceive me—not if you blackened your face, and dyed your hair like a nigger's. But then I love you," with his strangely winning smile.

His words conveyed a sting, though he never intended it.

It had always been a bitter thought to Treherne that she, who had once loved him so passionately, should not have known him as soon as Kitty Gifford; but this want of perception he felt sure had saved her from much painful embarrassment, if not from a daily sorrow, so that he knew that he ought to be thankful for it.

Still, there are some blessings which are rather worrying than not. We recognise them as such, but nevertheless, our gratitude is not up to the mark, and we feel ashamed of it.

"You never knew me with brown hair, so you don't know what a difference it made. And I dare say if I had tried to make Lady Dacre remember me I could have done so like a shot; but I did just the other thing. I did not want her to know me, and I've avoided her as much as I could," and Treherne gave an involuntary sigh.

"Hil said you were great friends still," said the boy, doubtfully; "but I didn't see how that could be. I suppose she ought to be angry with you still, if she knew?"

"Perhaps, I don't know," said Treherne, thoughtfully. "I oughtn't to have lost my temper, but Sir Thomas didn't get much more than he deserved."

"He's a detestable sneak! I hate Sir Thomas!" exclaimed Wilfred, passionately. "I only wish you had never pulled him out of the mine, and then he would be dead and out of the way!"

"My dear boy, what fearful sentiments!" said Lord Wildgrave, with a smile, as he came up to the side of the bed. "You sound quite murderous. Perhaps you will be wanting me out of the way some day."

"No fear," answered his son, promptly. "I couldn't do without you at all."

The Viscount put his hand caressingly on the fair head which was so inexpressibly dear to him.

"Treherne wants to know when you are going to see him."

"Oh, very soon. I got into this stupid

state just because I fancied something was wrong; but now that I know he's all right," smiling up into his face, "I shan't fidget any more."

"Dinner is waiting, so come along," and the Viscount walked towards the door.

"Bend down, I want to say something," said Wilfred, hastily. "If you ever want to hide, come to me. Warner attends to these rooms. He wouldn't peach on you for the world, and it would be such fun to have you."

Treherne smiled.

"Thanks; but I don't mean to play 'hide and seek' any more."

"You won't let yourself be taken?" with an expression of the utmost horror.

"Not if I can help it. I'll come back if I can before I go."

"You are not going back to-night?" in dismay.

"Yes, I am. I promised Sir Thomas, you know. I've got him under my charge at present," edging towards the door.

"Kick him out, give him bad beef-tea—anything you can to get rid of him!"

"Treherne!" Lord Wildgrave called from down the corridor, and with a nod and a smile he left the room and hurried after his host.

It was good to be at the Castle once again, to be welcomed with gentle courtesy by Lady Wildgrave, to see Hilda's eyes shining with joy at the sight of him, to be away from Sir Thomas and his harsh voice.

"What humbugs we all are naturally!" he thought to himself as he looked across the table and saw Kitty Gifford laughing and chattering just as usual, when only a few minutes before she had looked white as death, and as if she could never smile again. And he knew that he himself looked as if he hadn't a care in the world as he made himself agreeable to his hostess, and cast a laughing glance now and then across the table to where Hilda was sitting between Lord Davenport and Captain Gifford. To his surprise, the latter was continually staring at him wrathfully; but as he was not conscious of ever having given him any cause of offence this odd behaviour did not weigh heavily on his mind.

He forgot his interview that afternoon with Kitty, which certainly might have had an odd effect on a husband who did not know Treherne's story, and was ignorant of the grave event that had transpired. Therefore he maintained an appearance of the utmost innocence, and met his angry glances with cool indifference. This only made matters worse, and Captain Gifford was ready with the most violent language, if he could only catch this horribly handsome man alone as soon as dinner was over. But he never had the chance.

Treherne was too agreeable to be left in peace by any of the men, two of whom immediately dragged their chairs nearer to his when the ladies had withdrawn, and talked to him persistently till it was time to go into the drawing-room. When there, Ronald made his way at once to Hilda's side, for he was anxious for a few words with her.

The exciting events that had happened since their parting on the night of the dance had somewhat softened the remembrance of it, and she looked up at him with a glad look of welcome.

"Would you mind coming into the conservatory for a few minutes?" he said in a low voice. "I have a few things I want to say to you."

Her cheeks grew rosy red, but as she got up from her seat she had presence of mind enough to say, "I want to show you the Taxonia, it is lovelier than ever."

When they had reached the farthest corner, and were entirely out of hearing, he said, with a smile, "I want to know how I stand with you. Am I to lose your friendship because I happen to be myself?"

He watched the colour deepening in the soft cheeks, saw the red lips part, but heard no words come from them.

"I know that I've lived a lie," he broke out, impulsively, "and you've every right to condemn me; but I have an excuse, for I was driven to it against my will. I loathed it all the while."

"It has puzzled me," she said, frankly, "but I knew it must be right if you did it."

"I can't bear you to hear the one side of the story without the other. It makes me sound as if I were a scoundrel and a coward, and Heaven knows I am neither," frowning as if he were in pain.

"Tell me the whole story from the beginning," she said, entreatingly, for she was longing to find some proof that he was still the hero she had fancied him.

"I know I can trust you," as he leant back against the wall with folded arms whilst she sat down on a garden chair, and looked up into his saddened face with expectant eyes.

"Won't you sit down?" she said, shyly.

"You won't have to talk so loud."

He took a chair close by her, and leant his arm on the back of it. Every now and then his voice grew husky and unsteady, but he was urged on by the wish to right himself, and he told the whole story, as she requested, from the beginning.

She listened with passionate sympathy to every detail, and the tears rushed to her eyes when she heard that the hard-earned fortune came too late, when his promised bride was given to another.

"Oh, if I had been there," she cried; "I'd have begged and prayed her not to listen to him. I should have known as well as possible that you would never have married any one else if you had said you wouldn't."

"You must not blame her," he said, gently.

"Her father was dying, and she was all alone. It was all my fault for not writing."

She shook her bright head.

"No, she ought to have waited. And now she is married to your worst enemy. Poor Lady Dacre!"

"Don't pity her," he said, hastily. "She does not know who I am. She never recognised me."

Hilda looked up at him with grave eyes, but said nothing. She remembered Lady Dacre's extreme agitation on the day of the accident—she would never forget that agonised cry of "Ralph! Ralph!" which broke from her lips as Treherne lay at her feet, and she thought he was dead. But she would keep Lady Dacre's secret as well as his, and be loyal to both, and nothing should induce her to betray either.

"And now, good-bye," he said, quietly. "It may be rather long before I see you again."

"What do you mean?" she asked in a sudden fright. "Has anything happened?"

"Yes, I doubt if I shall come here again; but I want you to think of me kindly when everyone else is abusing me."

She put her hands into his, whilst the hot tears ran down her cheeks.

"I shall think of you always as the best and kindest man that ever lived," she said, earnestly. "And if I can help it not a soul shall dare to touch you," she added, with flashing eyes.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### "WHAT HAS BROUGHT YOU HERE?"

It was late when Ronald Treherne reached the Tower, and let himself in with his own latch key.

It had been hard to tear himself away from the Castle, where several people had done their best to keep him.

Wilfred had clung to him as if he would never let him go. Hilda had looked at him with an almost irresistible appeal in her large eyes, Lady Wildgrave had pressed him with unusual earnestness to stay with them for that one night, adding that she was sure that Jennings would do very well for Sir Thomas, who ought to be perfectly satisfied with the

services of his own man without worrying his friends.

She seemed rather surprised to find that Treherne still refused, though with the utmost courtesy, to break his engagement, and turned away with a slightly offended air.

"I think it is quite absurd that Mr. Treherne should be victimised by that third-rate Sir Thomas," she remarked to Captain Gifford, who happened to be standing near her.

"If you will excuse me, Lady Wildgrave, it seems ridiculous to make such a fuss over a fellow like Treherne," said Captain Gifford, bluntly. "Seems as if no one could do without him."

"He is very nice, you know," she said, with a smile, her momentary irritation having quite disappeared. "He only came over to-night to see my poor boy."

"Are you sure of that?" thinking of his own wife and her agitated interview in the corridor. "I dare say he was glad enough to come on any pretext. Don't understand it a bit!" shaking his head. "Some fellows get on like a house on fire wherever they go. Treherne was just such another. No one could do enough for him, and the girls were mad after him at the Cape."

"Ah, poor fellow! I pity that man intensely," said Lady Wildgrave, perfectly unconscious that the very man who had excited her compassion was the one who had just left the Castle. "I often think of him landing in England so full of hope and happiness, and in a few short hours finding everything gone from him!"

"I wonder he didn't stay and fight it out," putting his mouth open thoughtfully. "He wasn't the sort of fellow to show the white feather."

"I always felt sure that he did it for Lady Dacre's sake, and I love him for it," she went on with gentle enthusiasm. "It would have been so much easier to stay here, and brave the worst; but her name would have been dragged into the papers, and I verily believe it would have killed her."

"She must be made of very different stuff to my wife. I believe Kitty would have gloried in it," he said, with a quiet smile. "It would take rather more than that to kill her."

Lady Wildgrave had taken no fancy to her husband's cousin, so dropped the subject quickly, and suggested that it was time to go to bed, and the party broke up.

It was very quiet down by the shore; there was no moon, and the waves broke gently on the beach, as if loth to disturb the stillness.

The night was very cloudy, and there was only one star visible, as Treherne looked up at the heavens with a longing for rest in his troubled breast. His troubles were closing in upon him fast, nearer and nearer each passing day, and it seemed impossible to evade them.

He had said good-bye, probably for the last time, to his friends at the Castle, and Lady Dacre he had parted from without a good-bye at all. Possibly he would never see her again, and his heart grew cold within him as he stepped into the silent house.

Twelve o'clock struck as he turned up the lamp in the hall, and looked round to see if there were any letter or message written on a slip of paper left for him on the table. No, there was nothing to-night, so he took off his hat and looked round for his smoking jacket, which Weston usually put ready for him, so that he might change his coat without any delay before going into Sir Thomas.

Not seeing it, he thought he would go in just as he was in his dress things, and not change till he went to bed, as it was so late. He supposed that Jennings was with his master, and that both were asleep; for the silence was unbroken.

For a minute he stood still, puffing at a capital cigar which Lord Wildgrave had given him, and which he was loth to throw away before he had finished it, and then tossing the end into the old-fashioned fender, he laid his

hand gently on the handle of the bedroom door, and turned it softly.

As he closed the door behind him he only suppressed his astonishment with the utmost difficulty, for there, straight before him, was Cyrilla Dacre, sitting in the high-backed chair where he had so often sat; her golden head drooping, her long hair resting on her cheeks, her hands clasped loosely in her lap on her white dress.

He stood as if spell-bound. He forgot Sir Thomas, though he was but a yard from him, he forgot the barrier that divided them like an unseen rampart, he forgot those months of cold despair.

For the moment she was his Cyrilla, his Cyrilla alone, and he caught up the little handkerchief which had dropped from her fingers, and pressed it passionately to his lips.

"Oh, my darling!" he whispered, hoarsely, his whole heart going out to her as if carried beyond his powers of restraint by a surging ocean of tenderness.

"Ah! you! scoundrel!" hissed rather than said Sir Thomas, his lean face appearing round the edge of the damask curtain, his hawk-like eyes gleaming with wild fury.

Treherne started as if he had had an electric shock. Lady Dacre raised her head slowly, smiling in a dream-like fashion, then started into vivid consciousness as she saw Ronald standing before her with a strange look upon his stern face, and her husband bowing upon the man whom he had called his special friend.

"Oh! what is it?" she cried, springing to her feet, "and what has brought you here when he told you not to come?"

"What has brought him?" exclaimed the Baronet, fiercely. "You! That is quite clear. Here, before my very face, he dares to make love to you. Oh! it's a trick from beginning to end."

"Stop, Sir Thomas!" said Treherne, sternly. "Say what you like of me, but you shan't insult Lady Dacre."

"I won't be dictated to by you, sir!" clutching the bedclothes with nervous fingers. "It's a plot between you; any fool can see that!"

"What is a plot?" Cyrilla interrupted him hastily, putting her white hand on his caressingly, as if trying to still his passion.

He threw it off impatiently and glared up at her sweet face, as if trying to discover some signs of guilt there.

He could see that she was shaking from head to foot, but she met his fierce eyes bravely.

"You must be dreaming, Thomas."

"I'm wide awake, and thank goodness I am, or the devil only knows what would have happened behind my back!" said Sir Thomas, furiously.

Treherne threw open the door. He had the greatest difficulty on earth to restrain himself, but for the sake of the woman he loved far more than his pride, he was keeping his temper under the most wonderful control.

Still, he could not answer for himself much longer if Sir Thomas continued to pour these insults on his wife's innocent head.

"Lady Dacre," he said, quite quietly, "asky back you to leave the room?"

"No—no. I had better stay."

"Excuse me. You must go," giving her an imperative look, which was more effective than a spoken command, and thrust her strangely.

She moved slowly towards the door.

"Cyrilla! stay here! I command you!" cried Sir Thomas, excitedly, just as Treherne closed the door behind her.

Then he came forward and stood by the bedside with folded arms.

"Now, Sir Thomas, explain yourself," he said, shortly, taking the Baronet's breath away by the power of his strong composure.

"Explain myself, indeed!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, in angry surprise. "I wonder what you will say next? I wrote you a letter myself to tell you not to come, as my wife was going to stay. And then, with the utmost

effrontery, you present yourself in the middle of the night."

Treherne passed over the fact that it could scarcely be called effrontery to return to his own home, and said, coldly,—

"I never got your letter, Sir Thomas."

"No good pretending that when it followed you to Woodlands," with a sneer.

"I was dining at the Castle, so that accounts for it," calmly.

"Does it account for your standing there before my very eyes and calling my wife—a darling?" his eyes flashing.

The blood rushed to Treherne's face, then receding as quickly, left it pale as death.

"She was asleep," he said, hoarsely. "She will never know that I made such a fool of myself if you only keep quiet."

"Keep quiet, indeed!" his voice shrill but quavering. "If you think I'm the sort of man to let such disgraceful things go on and hold my tongue, you are quite mistaken."

"Nothing disgraceful has happened," said Treherne, sternly. "I'm made of flesh and blood, and Lady Dacre is very lovely. Bear me witness that I have avoided her as much as possible."

"Yes," Sir Thomas interrupted, with a sneer, "you avoided her before my face, but I've Mrs. Gifford's word for it that you meet very often behind my back."

"Then Mrs. Gifford lied!" cried Treherne, hotly, nearly wild with the thought of her treachery. "We've never met, and that I swear, except in the most casual way on the road."

"Of course you would say so," leaning back on his pillows.

"Sir Thomas, if you weren't ill, I'd kick you out of my house!" he said, slowly, as he drew his brows together.

A sudden flash of recognition passed through Sir Thomas's brain.

Treherne's face, with that resentful frown on it, and with that fire of indignation burning in his eyes, carried him back to that fatal Seventeenth of May, when he stood face to face with Ralph Trevanion.

But he only thought the likeness was strong, for he could not credit the astounding fact that this was the man whom he had sought for, for so long.

"I shall be out of your house to-morrow," he said, angrily. "I would rather die on the road than stay in it another hour more than I could help."

"No, Sir Thomas, you can't move," said Treherne, suddenly realising all the thought of his enemy's physical weakness. "Stay here and get well as fast as you can. I promise you that I won't enter it again as long as you are under this roof."

"You are very good, Mr. Treherne, but I won't wait to be kicked out. To-morrow morning I go to Mountstret, and I wish to Heaven I'd never come near this place."

"Listen to me, Sir Thomas," leaning over the bed, and looking down into his angry face with eyes from which all the anger had died out. "You called me your friend that night in the mine. You even told me you wished me to be your son, but didn't I always do my best to keep you off? You've invited me over and over again to Mountstret, but have I ever come?"

"No; you would never do a single thing I asked you. You were speaking the truth now, with a little nod, and a malicious glance."

"Yes; and shouldn't I have acted differently—shouldn't I have haunted your house day after day—if I were the villain you pretend to think me?" looking at him in a way to compel an answer.

"How can I tell?" said the Baronet, sullenly. "It may be all of a piece—treachery and falsehood on every side."

"Look me in the face, Sir Thomas, and say that I lie, if you can!"

The Baronet moved uneasily, but Treherne fixed his eyes upon him with all the strength of his resolute will, and forced him to look up.



Certainly those frank, fearless eyes seemed to speak for themselves.

They must belong to a man who was true to the very core. But Sir Thomas, unfortunately, had been something with his own eyes. He had also heard some words with his own ears, and though the old influence was strong in Treherne's face and manner, and he felt sorely tempted to stretch out his hand and ask him to be friends, he turned his face to the wall in sullen silence.

The next minute he heard the door close, and on looking round he found that Treherne had gone.

#### CHAPTER XXXIII.

##### WHERE WAS HIS MASTER?

RONALD TREHERNE walked straight out of the house without looking to right or left. Some instinct made him catch up his hat, but he forgot to shut the door after him, and it swung dismally backwards and forwards in the wind. Sir Thomas heard it, and the sound worried his nerves, but no one came to him—so he could get no redress for this particular grievance. The other sort of grievance he had endured, in his own masterful fashion, and he had managed to get rid of the only friend he had ever owed for ever much—but that idea did not give him great satisfaction. Even now, before half-an-hour had passed, he had begun to miss him. If Treherne had been there that door would have been shut directly, and he would not have been lying there with a dry throat, and that glass of lemonade at such a tantalising distance on the table. Was it only last night that he had sat by the side of his bed, and told him the story of his life, giving up his rest in order to while away the weary hours?

There could not have been any hypocrisy in that, for Cyrella was not in the house, and even their meeting to night seemed, on the face of it, too have been accidental. His wife had fallen asleep, which he would not have done if she had been expecting him, and if he had planned to come and meet her, surely it would not have been in her husband's room. He thought over it all till he grew so perplexed and worried that his brain was quite bewildered, and his head was racked with intense pain. It showed that she was really convinced of his wife's innocence, because, in spite of her long absence, it never occurred to him to suspect her of having left the house with Treherne.

He knew the utter purity of her heart, having often seen her thrown amongst foreigners abroad who admired her intensely and wished to lay their devotion at her feet. She had kept them off with such sweet dignity, and never given them the smallest encouragement, and even for herself her husband's complete trust. Kitty's words had done her no real harm; only they had served to irritate Sir Thomas, and set his temper on edge, which made him a most trying patient. What was keeping her away now? Was she so mortally offended that she would not come back again till the baggage came to take her to Mountarrel?

What on earth had become of Jennings? He was such a fool that if someone would not come until he was called, even if there was no one in the house to call him.

Alone, thirty, weak, and helpless, unable to rest because of his distracting thoughts, the Baronet was very miserable. His own discomfort made him regret Treherne, for he was an utterly selfish man, and could be more easily influenced by physical inconvenience than by anything else.

He began to reflect that perhaps after all he was not so very much to blame. Any man with eyes in his head must be struck by the beauty of Lady Dacre, and if he could be quite sure that Treherne had kept his admiration to himself, except on this one occasion when he thought himself unheard, he really thought that in course of time he might be forgiven—if he behaved very well.

The morning light was streaming into the room when the door opened quickly, and Cyrella, looking like a ghost, came forward on tip-toe. She looked anxiously towards the bed, and was surprised to see that her husband was wide awake, and that the valet was not with him.

"So here you are at last!" grunted Sir Thomas, thankful to have some one to abuse. "I might have died in the night for all you would have known or cared."

"Why isn't Jennings here? He certainly ought to be," really concerned to find that he had been alone.

"Not likely he'd stir a finger, selfish brute, unless he was told to."

"Does he usually wait to be called?"

"Yes, he sleeps like a top. But, of course, you never thought of me. I suppose you've been having a comfortable snooze somewhere yourself?"—looking up at his wife with anxious eyes, as he thought of his own restless night.

"I have not slept at all," she said, wearily; "but that doesn't matter. Can't I make you more comfortable?"—leaning over him and arranging his pillows.

She gave him his lemonade and waited on him carefully, her heart all the while weighed down by the most overpowering anxiety, for she could not tell what had happened, and she feared the worst.

Hidden in a corner of the hall, she had seen Ronald Treherne come out of her husband's room with such a look on his face as she would never forget.

It was such a look as a man might wear as he stood with a loaded revolver pointed at his head, or leant on the parapet of Waterloo Bridge speculating on what he should feel like in the muddy waters below.

His face was like a nightmare to her, and she could not get it out of her thoughts. If Colonel Gordon had only been there, the faithful friend, who would never let any harm come near him if it was in his power to prevent it!

But he was alone with his own sad thoughts, with the dread of a coming climax which would seem like the crack of doom.

"Mind, we go to Mountarrel as soon as the carriage comes," said Sir Thomas, before he turned over and went to sleep.

Cyrella would be thankful to be safe in her own home, but she felt it her duty to remonstrate, as she thought the move would be so very bad for him.

He was so weak that he could scarcely stand, and how he was to get down the hill to the carriage she could not imagine.

Sir Thomas, however, persisted in his intention, and she knew he would carry it out if he could by the strength of his indomitable will.

About seven o'clock she fell into the sound sleep, produced by exhaustion, and therefore did not hear Colonel Gordon arrive and ask for Mr. Treherne, nor Weston's answer that he had not been there that night.

"I suppose he slept at the Castle after all?" he said, as he turned away.

"Yes, I suppose so, sir. Lady Dacre spent the night here, so Mr. Treherne wasn't wanted, and I'm sure he must have been glad of a night's rest," said Weston heartily, for he did not approve at all of his master wearing himself out for Sir Thomas.

"Give my compliments to Lady Dacre, and if she wants me, she knows where to find me."

Then he walked down the hill, shaking what a happy chance it was that Lord Wildgrave carried off Treherne if Lady Dacre stayed at the Castle.

After the fine weather they had been having for so long, it was a windy, disagreeable day, but nothing would deter the Baronet from his purpose.

Weston was immensely surprised to hear that the invalid was going home; but, as he was anxious to further the arrangement, he threw no hindrances in the way.

To do away with the difficulty of coming

down the hill, he proposed that the carriage should be sent round to the back, where the ground was broken, but not quite impracticable.

Cyrella agreed to this thankfully, although it would cause some delay, for the carriage would have to go round by a circuitous route to reach the back of the Tower.

Jennings had a difficult task to dress his master, but even in this Weston was willing to help in order to relieve himself from further trouble on his account.

He could not help wondering what his own master would say to this sudden flight.

He said something of the kind to Lady Dacre as she was standing at the door ready to start.

"I think Sir Thomas told Mr. Treherne that we were going last night," she said, quietly.

"Mr. Treherne here last night!" exclaimed Weston in surprise. "Why, I never knew it, my lady; and I told the Colonel this very morning that he hadn't been near the place. Might I be so bold as to ask why he went off?"

A faint pink stole into Lady Dacre's cheeks. "He would not have come if he had known that I was staying with Sir Thomas. I think he was scarcely here for one half-hour."

"He must have had his dress things on, coming from the Castle; and I don't believe he had been into his room, for everything was in its place; and he do make a dreadful upset, he do, if he but put his nose in for five minutes. It's strange," scratching his head, as he usually did when he was puzzled.

"Bless that dog!" he broke out, wrathfully; "He ain't been quiet for half a minute. I might let him loose to quiet his tongue."

Ponto was nearly mad with eagerness to get away; and, as soon as his chain was unloosed, he rushed off with a wild bark round the corner of the Tower, and disappeared.

Then out came Sir Thomas, leaning on his valet's shoulder, and looking as pale as death.

He stumbled as he tried to put his foot on the step, but Watson and Jennings managed to give him a hoist up, and landed him safely on the mattress, which was laid from one seat to the other.

He sank back on the pillows, looking so ill that his wife was quite alarmed, and they were nearly driving off before she remembered to slip some money into Weston's hand.

She gave a wistful look at the Tower, wondering if she would ever see either the quaint old building or its master again, and Weston muttered as he looked after her,—

"Bless her sweet face! She's a million times too good for that wussie half obbers!"

Later in the afternoon he besought him that he might as well walk down to the mine, and ask if he had to prepare dinner for either of the gentlemen that evening.

He whistled for Ponto, but the dog did not answer his call, so he went on without him.

Colonel Gordon was standing outside the mouth of the south adit talking to Mr. Harwood, who had not been dismissed in consequence of Treherne's representations that the accident was entirely owing to his own careless calligraphy.

"Only want to know, sir, if either you or Mr. Treherne be coming to dinner to-night?" said Weston, touching his hat.

"I don't know what to say. Mr. Treherne hasn't turned up yet," said the Colonel, with a worried air.

"The old gentleman has taken himself off, and her ladyship's gone with him; and, please, sir, I made a mistake last night, the master did come home, but was off again like a shot."

The Colonel immediately parted from Harwood, and made a sign to Weston to follow him.

He was thunderstruck to hear that Sir Thomas had left the Tower, and he was convinced that something had happened during Treherne's brief visit.

Weston could tell him nothing to allay his anxiety, and he strolled off by himself to think the matter over.

According to Weston Treherne must have been in his evening things, so that it was natural that he should go to Woodlands if not to the Tower to change them. And yet he might have heard something which made instant flight absolutely necessary; but flight would be so futile if his unconventional clothing made him conspicuous to every chance passer-by.

If he had simply left the house in a huff he must have turned up by this time, for there would have been no reason to go and hide himself.

Weston had particularly mentioned Lady Dacre's terror-stricken face when he first saw her in the morning.

If anything had happened before her it must have had a terrible effect on Treherne, and Gordon's heart sank within him lower and lower as he thought it over.

What was that? The miserable howling of a dog. Everything seemed to affect his nerves to-day, and he gave himself an impatient shake, for he considered nerves as the special property of women.

He quickened his pace as he buttoned his coat across his chest, for the wind was sharp, and what sun had deigned to shine that gloomy day had now shrouded itself in a bank of clouds. The sea looked angry, with splashes of white foam here and there, and the waves broke with haste and fury on the narrow beach.

Suddenly an icy chill crept over Gordon's heart.

That black Newfoundland could be no other but Ponto.

Why was he crouching here all by himself? Why was he howling like a messenger of Death? Why was his head turned so persistently towards that dark object floating on the water?

He darted up to Gordon, licking his hands and barking wildly, then he hurried back to his former position, and raising his black nose, gave utterance to the dismallest howl ever heard.

It blended with the shrieking of the wind, it mingled with the roar of the waves, and seemed like a fitting accompaniment to that melancholy object—a boat floating bottom upwards at the mercy of the storm.

Gordon's eyes were riveted on the boat which was coming nearer every minute.

Presently, one wave bigger than any other, caught it up like a plaything and then dashed it in cruel, malignant sport at his feet.

And with a shudder that shook him from head to foot, and turned the blood to ice in his veins, he recognised it as the *Waterwitch*—Treherne's favourite boat—which had been lost and recovered on the day that Wilfred Romer was so nearly drowned.

Ponto sprang at it and tried to drag it further up with his strong teeth; but where was the master for whom he was watching?

(To be continued.)

## A TORN LETTER; AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

—o—

"DROOP! Vantage in! Game!" called Clara; then adding: "I really must rest, Mr. Dacre. Come, let us sit in the arbor. I have had enough tennis for this morning."

And sniting her action to her wish, she tripped gaily over the close-clipped lawn to where a cool summer-house cast a refreshing shade.

Frank Dacre followed her rather more slowly.

When he reached her retreat, she was already ensconced upon a rustic chair—the only one in the place; so he had to be content with a stool at her feet.

After a silence, during which Clara fanned herself violently with her hat, and Frank, lighted a cigarette, she asked:

"Must you really go back to town to-morrow—really?"

"I am afraid I must. It is very kind of you to act as if you would like me to stay, but I cannot. Business you know."

"Of course. It is always business—business that upsets all our plans—business that usurps all our pleasures. Yet—"

"We could not live without it," interrupted Frank.

"No," said Clara, slowly.

But her face wore a look that was far from contentment, and her little foot beat impatiently upon the rung of the rustic chair.

Then the conversation drifted off upon many and varied topics, and they sat laughing and talking until the luncheon bell summoned them to the dim, sweet-scented dining-room, where Clara's mother and brother Dick awaited them.

Dick proposed that they go for a ride, late in the afternoon, when it grew a little cooler.

To this Clara and Frank assented.

The horses were ordered for five o'clock.

The men retired to smoke and play billiards; Clara went to her room to write letters and sleep till the riding hour arrived.

When five o'clock came, Dick had a headache and could not go with them; so his sister and Frank had perforce to go by themselves—a penance they seemed to bear with great resignation.

They were coming home very slowly, thinking doubtless, for they said nothing, when Frank suddenly asked:

"Do you see that star?"

"Where—just above the horizon? Yes."

"See how it seems to follow the crescent of the new moon. Is it not faithful? Ever it follows; still they seem to grow no nearer. Thus it is with my heart and its best beloved; ever it follows, never it reaches."

"Is your love, then, cold to you, and distant as the moon?" Clara asked, softly.

"Alas, I fear so!"

"Yet do you not know for sure?" she said.

"I cannot tell—I merely think. Now you—"

He paused.

"I?" she said, quickly. "I? Why, I do not think about it at all."

"More's the pity!" he said, sadly; "for you are as the moon, and I the star. You are my best beloved. But it is useless; I see you do not even think about it."

"No," she murmured. "I do not think—I know that I love you."

And the tender crescent of the infant moon looked down upon that picture that since the world began has been old, yet is ever new.

"I have written," said Frank, after supper, "but I will not go back to town. I am too loth to lose the blessing I have just acquired, even for a moment."

Clara's joy at this announcement was acute. She took him instantly out to the porch, where, in a leafy, dusky corner, they sat and talked softly all the evening as only lovers can.

After the good nights had been said, Clara, in passing through the hall to go to her room, found a small piece of paper like the half-sheet of a letter.

Idly she picked it up. Her heart almost stopped beating as she read its contents. It was in Frank's handwriting, and was part of a letter. It read thus:—

"DEAREST PET"

"I have news Clara. She is mine fortune that favours me"

"She is rich That I do not love her all its contents—is"

"I am chained here see you soon, and"

"Your devoted  
"FRANK."

This Clara read. Her heart seemed to cease beating, and a lump rose in her throat. This, then, was the end of it all. He had not cared for her. She was nothing to him. And she had loved him so dearly. It was so cruel of him. And this Pet? She felt her cheeks burn. Who could this pet be? Oh, the humiliation of it all!

She hurried to her room, and there, flinging herself across her couch, she wept and sobbed into the night, at the perfidy of this man and her own blindness.

Meanwhile, Frank utterly unconscious of the trouble he had caused was sleeping as only those can whose conscience is untroubled and whose digestion is unimpaired.

When Clara appeared, long after breakfast, looking wan and pale, Frank arose, and would have embraced her, but she gently repulsed him.

"No, not now. Frank—Mr. Dacre, I mean, let us forget last night and its occurrences. We will let the dead past bury its dead," and she smiled such a poor, wretched, little, shame-faced smile, that she was nearer akin to tears than mirth.

Frank was aghast.

"What do you mean?" he stammered.

"Do you ask, Mr. Dacre? I should think you might guess. 'Fortune favours me,' even as it has you. I am out of my paradise; 'twas a fool's one. I am better off as it is."

"I do not understand. Surely you were not flirting, or is this a test of my affection to vanquish—Oh, Clara, do not make me utterly wretched!"

"Wretched!" she cried, scornfully. "What pity had you upon me?"

"I had not pity, sweetheart, for you at any time. I merely had its next of kin—love."

"Believe me, it is useless to argue. My eyes were opened last night. I am undeceived."

"Ah, I see it now!" he said. "You never loved me—you were but amusing yourself. Well, I forgive you. Some day you may appreciate the fact that a jilt is at best but a sorry creature, and coquetry unworthy the ambition of any true woman."

He was gone and with him went the sunshine and the peace of Clara's life.

It was a bitter March day. The train moved slowly through the thick banks of snow. As the night descended the storm raged more furiously, and the guard replied to Clara's question that he feared they would come to a standstill long before they reached Aberdeen.

Clara was glad, decidedly so.

"Then I shall stay at Perth," she said.

It was as the porter had said. Most of the passengers alighted and went to the station hotel, there to remain until the track could be cleared and their journey resumed.

After supper, Clara sat in, trying to warm her feet at the fire and wondering what her uncle in Aberdeen would think of her non-appearance.

At last she decided to go and see if she could not send him a telegram.

As she entered the office to make the inquiry, a voice, which made all the blood in her body rush to her head, said:

"Way, Miss Fanshawe, what brought you here?"

She turned and would have fallen had she not leaned against the doorway for support.

It was Frank Dacre!

"I," she said, "am going to my uncle in Aberdeen on a visit. And you?"

"I am here with my brother Peter on business."

"Peter!" she repeated, absently, "your brother?"

"Yes, Why?" he inquired.

Then this unaccountable woman burst into tears and retired precipitately to the sofa in the parlour.

Frank followed.

"Miss Fanshawe, Clara darling—what have I done? What is the matter?"



"Oh, Frank, I am such an idiot, and I am so—so very wretched!" And once again she fell to weeping hysterically.

Frank tried his best to quiet her, and during the course of her outburst he learned of the letter, then in spite of himself he smiled.

"I have the rest of that letter upstairs. I found it in an old coat only yesterday. Surely it was fate. Wait one moment and I will fetch it."

He rushed out of the room.

Clara drew from the pocket of her dress the torn bit of paper. It was all the souvenir she had had of her love, and she cherished it, even though it had brought her so much sorrow.

Frank returned with the other half of the letter, and putting them together read aloud:

"DEAREST PETER:

"I have news—I have succeeded in winning Clara. She is mine. Was there ever such fortune as the fortune that favours me? I wish to marry at once.

"She is rich only in my affection, but I have enough. That I do not love her more than all the earth—more than all its contents—is absurd, untrue.

"I am chained here by the sweetest of fetters. But I will see you soon, and let you judge how happy is your brother,

"Your devoted  
"FRANK."

"Forgive me!" murmured Clara. "And Peter?"

"He is here!" said a tall, young man who had just entered.

"Welcome, my brother!" said Clara, smiling, and extending her hand.

"Clara," said Frank, "now that that miserable affair is settled, when will you marry me?"

"Just after Easter, and—and Peter shall be best man."

The telegram was sent—not to her uncle in Aberdeen, but to her mother—and it read:

"I have met Frank. All is arranged. Am very, very happy!"

## THE SECRET WHICH PARTED THEM.

—o:—

### CHAPTER VII.

It was breakfast time at Norrington Castle. The guests who had assembled for the coming-of-age festivities had all departed the day before, and the family were left alone.

Only the Earl, Countess, and Viscount were in the room, the younger members of the household having breakfasted, as was their wont, with the governess in another apartment, and at an earlier hour.

While Lord Douglas was present the conversation was upon general topics. The post bag was brought in towards the conclusion of the meal, and unlocked by the master of the house.

"A letter for you, my dear," he said, passing it to his wife.

"From Lady Constance," she returned, with a smile, as she accepted it from his hand.

"From Lady Constance, eh?" continued the Earl, with a grim smile; "then, Stirling, she has honoured you, too. You had better take care of your heart, for she is a remarkably pretty and attractive woman."

The Viscount received the envelope with assumed indifference, leaving it upon the table beside him, to conclude his breakfast.

"The blood of the rising generation is decidedly more cool than it was when I was young," laughed Lord Douglas. "I should scarcely have left the letter of a charming woman unopened for long."

"Poor Lady Constance," said the Countess,

looking up. "She has sprained her ankle badly, and wrote to me from the sofa. She does not name the Colonel, but says how greatly she enjoyed her stay with us."

"Which means, I suppose, that *he didn't*," growled the Earl. "Well, Gwendoline, don't ask him again, that is all. I shall be happy to welcome his wife. I can't say that he even tried to make himself agreeable the two last days he was with us."

"No, he seemed in a thorough bad temper, did he not?" struck in the Viscount. "In fact, I told Lady Constance so."

"Oh! Stirling, how could you?" asked the Countess.

"And what did she say?" questioned the Earl, curiously.

"She thought he was ill. Lady Constance is still in love with her husband."

"A very unusual case, then," replied Lord Douglas, "and he is to be envied," and he let his eyes rest upon his wife. She flushed at his scrutiny, and in no wise tried to answer him; but her son took her part.

"If that was meant for one for the mater, father, and I think it was, it was unjust; no man ever had a better wife than yours."

"When you hear me state otherwise, Stirling, it will be time enough for you to speak!" replied the Earl, coldly; and as he met the glance of his son and returned it with interest the two men looked very much alike.

Then he passed out of the room, carrying the post bag with him to his study.

Lady Douglas rose, and laid her hand upon her son's shoulder.

"My boy, why did you answer your father?" she asked; "you know no good ever came of it yet; it only hardens him."

"Why did he dig at you, then, mother?"

"At any rate, he was right in what he said, then. I—I never have loved him, my son, and he knows it. He was always hard, but I fear it is that which has embittered his life. If you were to marry Stella, and could never really gain her love, it would scarcely improve you. Now would it, dear?"

"It would turn me into a demon!" he cried, passionately; "but such a thing could never be; my darling *does* love me with all her heart."

"Happy you."

"But why did you not care for the pater?"

"Human love is not born of human will, my boy; but I have been as patient as I could be with him to try and make up to him for what I could not do."

"Yes, you have been patient, as patient as an angel; but, mother, why, *why* did you marry him?"

"I promised to tell you that old story, Stirling. Come to my boudoir and I will do so this very morning."

"I will, but, mother mine, I must go and read Lady Constance's letter first; that won't keep, you know," and he smiled at her meaningly.

"Ah! I thought as much when you did not open it, Stirl!" replied his mother, smiling too. "Your father thought you took the honour quietly, but *we know*, my boy, do we not?" and the Countess looked at him with loving eyes.

"I know that you are the best mother alive," he said, affectionately, "and I will soon join you in your own cosy little room, where we need fear no interruptions," and with a backward glance he too left her, looking himself in his own chamber to read the letter from Stella Eustace.

It was all which he could desire—fond, tender and maidenly.

The girl whom the Viscount had chosen from out of the world was altogether worthy of his devotion.

The Countess stood looking out of the window at the beautiful gardens, and the far-stretching park-land.

"What are such things worth when compared with love?" she murmured, sadly; "valuable as they are, they are nothing, absolutely nothing."

There was a long break; then she spoke again:

"Thank Heaven, my dear boy loves and is beloved, but even there my ill-fated lack of affection bears fruit. How is he to wed Stella when both the fathers say 'no'? I might persuade poor John, but my husband, *never*. I cannot see the end of it at all. And soon I shall have the girls with lovers, and more trouble over them, I suppose. Winifred has grown lovely of late, and in a few months I must introduce her into society for she will be seventeen.

"She is a sweet girl, without a trace of the proud Douglasses in her. Hennie, too, is a nice child, but there is a spice of the old stock there; I am more afraid for her future by far."

She sighed, and turning to the bell she rang it, and went to her boudoir, where she sat awaiting her son, too restless to settle to any occupation.

He came at length, with a bright and sunny face.

"I need not ask whether you have had a nice letter, dear," said the mother. "He who runs may read."

"Yes; it was more than nice. Stella is a darling! If only she and I had no fathers!"

"Hush! my son; such a thought is not right. Now, shall I tell you the tale of my sad life? Sit down and make yourself comfortable, Stirling, for it will take me some time, and give me some pain to piece together all which has made my position what it is. I did not come of such a blue-blooded stock as you Douglasses. My father was just a country squire, who had raised his place above its usual level in the county by marrying Lady Lucy Clavering, a rich, clever, handsome, and, I am afraid, rather a worldly woman. However, her tastes and my father's suited one another well.

"They were the fashion among a certain set, and the house was always full of hunting and racing people. I abhorred both. I had no desire to be, as my mother was, the finest rider in the shires; I liked riding very well in a mild way, but that was all.

"My real mother, *in love*, was Lady Eustace, the mother of Sir John, Stella's father. Ah! you start, my boy; you did not know that we had known one another in youth."

"No, indeed, mother. If you are such old friends, then surely you can persuade him to accept me for his daughter," he struck in, eagerly.

"You must wait for the rest before you judge, dear. It is just this old friendship which ties my hands. Lady Eustace and the former generation of Sir John's, lived at the Manor House, and I almost lived there, too. All that there is good in me I owe to that sweet woman.

"They had lost their only daughter, and I filled the blank in their hearts. They did the same to mine. When I say *they* I mean Lady Eustace, for, although Sir John was a kindly man, my affection for his wife was as sunlight compared to moonlight. I liked him—that was all.

"They had one son—Stella's father. He was a powerful edition of his mother. We saw a great deal of one another. Our tastes and thoughts were in unison. We grew together as it were, and we loved one another truly."

The lips of the Countess trembled, her voice failed her, the memory of those old days came over her as a flood, and tears ran slowly down her cheeks.

Her son was holding her hand. He was beginning to comprehend her trouble.

"You loved my darling's father!" he murmured, softly. "Oh, mother! I am so sorry for you, and yet, looking back, I can only thank Heaven, for had you married Sir John, if there had been any Stella at all, she would have been my sister, and life without my darling would have been a very colourless thing indeed."

"You comfort me, my son. I had nev-

looked at it in that light. Sometimes, out of the worst evil good springs like a fair, bright vision, and I am thankful for small mercies. Lady Eustace was very pleased at the attachment between her son and myself. To have me for a real daughter, she told me, would be a joy to her.

"Sir John liked me personally, but he had received the estate much encumbered from his father, and it would have satisfied him better if his son had chosen a richer wife.

"Both my parents clamoured for settlements which it was not in my lover's power to make, and then unpleasantness arose.

"In his young days your father kept race-horses, and at that time he was constantly at our house.

"His riches and position were not to be questioned. His power to make satisfactory settlements was not to be doubted, and my parents wished me to accept him for my husband.

"I will do Lord Douglas justice, I believe, he loved me truly, and for myself alone.

"He took a fancy to me at first sight, and my affection for another was kept from him.

"He never knew it until he asked me to be his wife, when I told him all.

"He was upset, disappointed—still again let me do him justice.

"He behaved like a gentleman, and at my expressed wish he left me, not without a reproach, not with kindly words; it was not in his nature, but still he left me.

"Something went wrong in a coffee plantation belonging to Sir John, and his son was sent out to try and put things straight again.

"At this time a strange run of ill luck began.

"Everything went wrong.

"My friend Lady Eustace died.

"It was a sore grief to me.

"There was a species of revolution upon the coffee plantation where my darling was. His last letter told me of it.

"Later, an account was given me in a newspaper, which told me that the ill-feeling had broken out again, and the son of the owner, Mr. John Eustace, had lost his life in the affair.

"I firmly believed it, so did Sir John, and this belief was confirmed by the fact that we heard from him no more.

"A year afterwards Sir John married a young and giddy girl, who could not be induced to remain at the Manor House.

"It was let to Lord Douglas, who was then more than ever in our family circle.

"He sought my love again, but it was buried in the grave of John Eustace, and I told him so plainly. At this juncture my troubles came to a climax.

"My father, who had long been deeply involved, came to niter ruin.

"He had made a way with his wife's money and his own, and had given bills of sale, upon his furniture even.

"Failing to pay, his goods were seized. Great vans stood at the door loaded with our household goods, until nothing was left, but some portmanteaus into which my mother and I had been permitted to pack our actual personalities.

"Upon those portmanteaus we sat, my mother and I.

"She was filled with a passionate grief which fairly alarmed me for her reason.

"I was still and quiet. Despair filled my heart.

"My father's feelings were more like mine. He stood watching the vans away, not replying by one word to my mother's wild reproaches.

"I felt sorry for my father, for I knew that she had done as much to bring on the domestic ruin as he had.

"Lord Douglas met those vans at the gate, and stopped them. They waited there while he walked up to the house.

"He entered the room and looked at us all, one after the other, and he wore the air of a victor.

"He wrung my father's ready hand, patted my mother's shoulder soothingly, then stood before me.

"Gwendoline," he asked, "shall I order those vans back? Only speak the word, and you shall be obeyed."

"I knew what that meant, knew full well, so did he, so did my parents. My mother fell on her knees before me, my father's eyes entreated, and the Earl of Douglas waited for his answer.

"I laid my hand in his.

"That was enough.

"The return of the things" was like magic. A few hours afterwards the house had resumed its old aspect. Very heartily I was congratulated upon all sides.

"My wedding was hurried on.

"The Earl was more than generous. He had just come into his title and property at the sudden deaths of his father and elder brother.

"People whispered that all had not been as it should have been between the father and son.

"That some serious quarrel had ensued there is but small doubt, and the then Earl died from a stroke consequent upon the effects of it.

"Many said that his son helped him out of this world; but your father's evidence proved that the report had been false.

"The poor fellow could not speak for himself, for he died by his own hand in a frenzy of remorse, for he had loved his father."

"What on earth did they have such a quarrel about, then?" inquired the Viscount, with deep interest.

"Ah! it was the old story—a woman was at the bottom of it—the woman he loved!"

"Did his father not approve of her?"

"No; he positively forbade the match, and set his son and heir in a fury—nay, more! He had got rid of the girl, and Richard, then Viscount Venwood had been unable to find or trace her!"

"Poor fellow! he was hardly used. I can picture my own feelings if any one spirited my darling away. I should feel very much inclined to do as he did. I would not live without her!"

"Hush! Stirling. You Douglasses allow too strong a flow of hot blood to rush through your veins. You set under such sudden impulses, and when you love you allow neither right nor wrong to stay you."

"Yes! when we love we do love, and when we hate there is no doubt about it," he laughed.

"But, mother, I interrupt you. Yet I am anxious to hear the rest of the story. Was Richard's girl ever heard of again?"

"Never, so far as I am aware. Of course, I never knew her, but I have seen her picture, and she was very beautiful."

"And there was nothing against her?"

"Nothing."

"Then my grandfather ought to have been—"

"He is dead and cannot defend himself," interrupted the Countess.

"So is uncle Richard, and probably his sweetheart, too. But go on with your own history, mother mine."

She obeyed him.

"Your father did all he had promised, and more. He paid my parents' debts, and our wedding day was fixed. On the eve of it John Eustace returned.

"It was a terrible home-coming for him—his mother dead, his father married again, the Manor House in the hands of a stranger, and last, though not least, the girl to whom he was engaged about to be the wife of another man.

"I shall never forget my feelings when he entered the room and clasped me to his breast. There had been treachery, but I do not believe that your father was a party to it.

"A dying clerk, who had served in the post-office at Ceylon, from whence the letters for Mr. Eustace went, confessed that he had accepted a round sum to suppress them both

coming and going for a year; and he had done it.

"Puzzled, bewildered and unhappy, John had worked on until it was possible to leave the estate, when he had started by the first mail—only to find his home desolate!"

"As I said before, it was the eve of my wedding day. The Earl came in and found me in the arms of the man I really loved. I shall never forget his face.

"I escaped from the sight of it, and left those two men, to each of whom I was pledged, together.

"What passed between them I never knew; but John Eustace, I believe, told the Earl that he was in honour-bound to give me up, and when he refused, I have but little doubt but that he accused him of being in the cruel plot against him; but in that I exonerate him.

"I saw his face when his eyes first rested upon my restored lover—nay, more, he is a Douglas, and would not so gully his name.

"Still, he would not give me my freedom.

"I sought it on my knees, but he said he loved me too dearly to give me up to the arms of another man.

"He lifted me, and swore to make me love him a hundred times more dearly than I had ever done John Eustace.

"I was helpless. My parents were on his side, I felt that I had sold myself to him, body and soul.

"We were married the following day, and we returned no more to the midlands, but settled down at Norrington Castle.

"The Earl gave up race horses from that time.

"He gave up my father and mother, too. I never saw them again.

"Like myself, doubtless he believed that they had planned the plot which had deceived me as to the death of John Eustace.

"As to John, we have never clasped hands since.

"We have met in society as mere acquaintances, that is all."

"I suppose he got over it, for he married about two years after I did, and his wife looked a remarkably sweet woman. She was Stella's mother, and her child is like her.

"I fancy they were happy, I never heard a whisper to the contrary; but she died when Stella was about two years old."

"It was strange that you and she should have met, and learnt to love at Mrs. Carmichael's country house, without an inkling of the feuds of your respective fathers, and the dangerous ground you were on."

"Your father's look was awful when you wrote to announce your engagement. It frightened me, and he vowed then that no child of Sir John Eustace should ever enter the Douglas family."

"I omitted to say the old baronet did not live long after his second marriage. The Ceylon plantation has prospered, and I suppose the present baronet, my old lover John, is now a rich man; but my boy, had he been as poor as the proverbial chorizo mouse I should have enjoyed my humble fare with him thankfully, for love would have sweetened it."

"Now I have told you all, and you will fully appreciate the fact that I cannot in any way help you. One word from main favour of his rival's daughter would stir your father to frenzy."

"So far, my boy, I cannot see your way, I confess; but Heaven is over all."

"All I can say to you, my boy, is trust in it."

She rose and clasped her arms about his neck, and escaped up the stairs to her own room.

"Poor old mother!" he murmured. "Sacrificed! nothing more or less; but I, too, will do my father the justice to believe that he did not stain the honour of our family by treachery."

"Stella, Stella, my darling, this story makes the winning you seem an almost hopeless task."

"Should your father tell you, as my mother



has told me, the tale of his misfortunes, your tender pity would be stirred for him, and you would not add one drop of bitterness to his cup; yet I know you love me, sweet one, ay, with all your heart, as I love you with mine," and he took her photo from his pocket and gazed at the beautiful face.

## CHAPTER VIII.

COLONEL VIVIAN was soon at length by the very best person who could have come upon him, the local doctor, making a short cut home after his work, across the fields.

He was surprised to see a man of his class sitting where he was, and in his condition.

After a moment of hesitation he stopped. "I am afraid, sir," said Mr. Brownrigg, civilly, "that the storm has done what it threatened. Doubtless you are a stranger in these parts, and did not know where to take shelter."

"If I may offer advice you will go to the inn and get your things dried. Wet garments worn long often have to be paid for by rheumatic fever."

"Mrs. Gates is a comfortable old woman, and shows a cheery face to her customers, even if she has but few luxuries to offer them."

"The room is clean, and her own are fresh; you cannot buy such luxury anywhere as she can grill for you. Moreover, she has a tap of really good bitter. I am going that way, and if you will allow me I will show you where it is."

Colonel Vivian assured himself, and thrust the letter into the hand bag. He had an umbrella, but he had not even put it up to shelter him.

He tried to laugh at his own appearance. "Yes! I am a little wet," he admitted, "and now I come to think of it, I am rather cold, too. I think a little 'hot with' might suit me better than the ale, however good."

Mr. Brownrigg, looking at him, decided that he should have it, notwithstanding the fact that Mrs. Gates had no spirit license. Mrs. Gates and he were the best of friends, and the stranger should be supplied out of his own cellar.

The doctor found it somewhat difficult to engage the Colonel in conversation. He seemed unable to fix his mind upon the subject on hand, and the medicine rightly judged that he was suffering from some severe shock to the nervous system, and considered that it would only be right to watch him, and see what would come of it. What did come of it all was a severe rheumatic attack, attended by fever.

Mr. Brownrigg took him to the inn, and his portmanaut was sent for, as he was too unwell to proceed further that night.

Mrs. Gates did her best in her humble way to make things comfortable; but unfortunately the Colonel was not accustomed to humble ways, and suffered accordingly.

It is only when on active service that men of Colonel Vivian's stamp make no complaint, even at real hardships; at other times they are complaining and luxurious.

The doctor brought the whisky, and laughingly invited himself to brew it, and share it with the stranger, and when he had had as much as he considered good for his patient he bade him good-night, begging him to get to bed, and if he should require him professionally to send for him in the morning.

He did require him, and it was a month before he was able to leave his bed.

Mr. Brownrigg was exceedingly kind to him, and the cheque which he placed in his hand at parting showed that he appreciated the fact.

Still, his daily companion though he was, Colonel Vivian never revealed the sorrow which was in his mind.

Lady Constance was in a terrible state. She wondered what had become of her husband, he had gone out of her life in such a strange and uncomfortable way.

Over and over again she re-enacted that scene in the railway carriage.

Surely, sharp though the quarrel had been, it ought not to have been enough to part them as it had done.

There must be more than that at the bottom of the affair—more than she could fathom.

Perhaps her Clement was tired of her, and had ceased to love her.

She had heard of such fickleness in men, ay, and in women too; but she had never dreamed that he and she could ever be less to one another.

It was a month of real wretchedness to her.

She missed Stella. She more than missed the Colonel.

She was suffering and anxious, and her bright looks deserted her.

The household servants talked among themselves about their master's absence.

The outside world began to chatter too. The domestics could not agree as to who was to be blamed.

For the most part the women-kind took their master's side, and the men that of their mistresses.

Lady Constance's fashionable friends swarmed about her as bees around a bonied flower, each one with his or her sting ready to attack if they had any opportunity.

But they never heard one word from her ladyship which the most clever brain could twist or turn.

By slow degrees her ankle got better, but not the pain about her heart, not the desolation in her life. She was so helpless.

There was nothing she could do, nothing whatever.

She did not know where her husband was. She had not the power even to communicate with him.

He might be out of England.

He might be dead and buried, for all she could tell; and yet how inexpressibly dear they had been to one another.

A sob arose to her throat when she thought of the sweetness of those days, and the present blank and desolation.

A whole month had gone by since she and Colonel Vivian had parted, when a lady visitor with her eyes fixed upon the fair face, said suddenly,—

"So Lady Constance, you have got your husband back. How glad you must be, you are an indulgent wife to give him so long a holiday," and watched the effect of her words.

"Have you seen him, then?" she inquired, feebly.

"Yes! I saw him going to our family solicitors, Messrs. Hyde and Seek. Perhaps he patronizes the same firm."

"Yes, they are his lawyers," her ladyship replied, and changed the subject of conversation. When alone again, her heart was in a turmoil of sad excitement.

Her husband was, it seemed, actually in town, and had not come home.

Was everything over between them for ever?

Was it possible thus to lay their mutual obligations aside without one word? To break the tight bands of the golden fetters of love?

Her heart cried out against it, but she saw there was nothing for her to do but to accept her fate, and in this her strong pride helped her.

If Colonel Vivian did not seek her, it was absolutely impossible for her to seek him.

She must accept his decision, but perhaps he would yet come to her!

She listened to every footfall. Each knock and ring made her aching heart stand still, flutter and beat wildly by turns, but her husband did not return.

She received a letter in his hand-writing, at last, at long last.

A cry of joy rose to her lips, stifled by conventionality, for the footman was standing before her, silver in hand, watching her.

He knew just as well as she did that the

letter was from Colonel Vivian, and that it was the first one he had written for over a month.

He saw, too, the sudden joy and its suppression.

Our servants see and know everything, little as we may suspect it, and according to their dispositions they are our friends or enemies, doing as good or evil.

When the man was gone she broke open the envelope, with eager, trembling fingers.

What had her husband said to her? the man she loved more than her life?

As she read on tears started to her eyes, a storm passed over the snowy bosom, the red lips quivered pitifully.

Her hot blood was stirred to anger at the cruel injustice, but no word passed her lips.

She sat looking at the well-known characters. A great wonder filled her mind.

Again she read the letter.

It was short, but certainly not sweet.

"DEAR CONSTANCE,

"After what has passed between us you will scarcely wonder that I say see must live apart."

"I might have forgiven your unfaithfulness had you been sorry for your sin, but your conduct proved that you were not."

"I have no wish to create a scandal, and so long as you remain apart from Viscount Vennwood you need fear nothing."

"You are welcome to my London house, and I have instructed my solicitors to pay you monthly a sufficient sum to keep it up."

"For myself, England is not likely to see me again for many years, and perhaps never. I have resigned my commission, and am going to Africa after big game, and shall keep up as little correspondence with the old country—where I have been so happy and so miserable—as possible."

"I do not desire any reply to this, any attempt to deny it would be futile."

"I hold the proofs of your guilt. I leave them with my solicitors, but with the orders not in any way to act upon them unless you oblige me to take an action against you by your conduct."

"Yours,

"CLEMENT VIVIAN."

Not one kind word.

Not a loving sentence.

Lady Constance hardened as she read it.

She knew herself to be innocent and free from blame, and she was justly indignant at her husband's groundless accusation.

She sat silent for a while, looking blindly before her.

Her heart felt to be turned to stone.

Then she rose with erect head, and proud step, and ordering her carriage, she drove to Colonel Vivian's solicitors.

## CHAPTER IX.

LADY CONSTANCE VIVIAN walked into the office of Messrs. Hyde & Seek, solicitors, with anything but the air of a guilty woman, as the partners thought; but they had received their instructions, and were obliged to carry them out.

Mr. Hyde offered her a chair with a grave, and reserved manner.

Mr. Seek cleared his throat, as though he had a great deal to say if really called upon to speak; still he evidently preferred to be passive, and the senior inquired the object of her ladyship's visit.

"I hear from my husband," she said, in her clear, ringing voice, "that he has left in your possession something which he calls 'the proof of my guilt.' I deny that proof can be obtained of a thing which is non-existent. I have, in no wise sinned against Colonel Vivian, and I have come to see these wonderful proofs."

"I am very sorry to disoblige a lady, I am sure," replied Mr. Hyde, "but we cannot show you what is in our possession; it is altogether outside our instructions. Still, if



["YOU CAN TELL COLONEL VIVIAN THAT I DECLINE HIS MONEY!" SAID LADY CONSTANCE.]

matters remain as they are, you need have no fear of an exposure; our client does not desire to make the affair public, and you are amply provided for."

Lady Constance arose.

"Do you think I would live upon the charity of a man who shuns my society and doubts my honour?" she asked, proudly. "You can tell Colonel Vivian I decline his money with thanks, and that although I refused to satisfy his curiosity, he might have trusted me. For the rest, I accept his decision that we must live apart. I hope in Heaven's mercy we may not cross one another's paths again. I have suffered enough; and, gentlemen, remember my last words to you."

"I loved my husband with all my heart, and my only sin against him was in declining to show him a paper which would have brought trouble on others, which, in fact, I had no right to show, and was in honour bound to keep secret. I wish you good day."

Mr. Hyde had barely time to get to the door ere her quick footsteps had reached it.

He bowed to her with real, not assumed, respect, and returned to his chair in silence.

Then the partners looked at one another and Mr. Seek distinctly cleared his throat and spoke.

"What do you think of it?" he inquired.

"An innocent woman. Still, Colonel Vivian is our client, and it is no matter of ours."

"She is a remarkably handsome woman."

"Remarkably! I should scarcely wish to be rid of her myself! but there is no accounting for these things. He evidently desires his freedom."

"But the letter?"

"Ah! the letter. Well, I suppose there must have been a flirtation, but I cannot believe in the guilt of a woman with such a face. Truth is stamped upon it."

"My dear Hyde, I hope her ladyship will not come here too often, for the sake of your peace of mind," laughed the junior partner.

"You may rest satisfied, Seek, that she

will not put her foot across our office door-mat again. I wish Colonel Vivian had gone to any one else."

Once more Mr. Seek cleared his throat.

"It is very unprofessional, my dear fellow; but, between ourselves, so do I!"

Mr. Hyde was right.

They saw no more of Lady Constance Vivian.

A few days afterwards the key of the Colonel's London house, which was placed at her disposal reached them with her compliments, and that was all.

Mr. Hyde really did his best to track her out, avowedly to persuade her to return to her home, and to accept the monthly cheque now due; but he could not find out where she had gone, and he often thought of the sweet proud face of the beautiful woman left alone, and wished he could befriend her.

Adamantine Mr. Hyde, who had carried through many a hard case, felt a touch of softness towards his client's wife, who, all his instincts told him, was innocent.

As for Lady Constance, without one outward sign of her inward pain, she paid her servants and the few bills she owed, packed all her personal property, and such furniture as had belonged to her parents in the days of long ago, a few old relics of those precious bygone times which had been so dear to her, and went—no one knew whither.

Colonel Vivian, nursing his anger against his wife, became a gloomy and morose man.

He had done the two most unwise things possible; he had left the two things he loved best in the world—his wife and his regiment—and such a wrench was scarcely likely to soften his character.

He had travelled in Africa before, and did not pause in the towns. His object was to escape from his fellows, in whom he had no longer pleasure nor faith.

He hired all the necessary paraphernalia for his expedition and started for the interior.

The journey was slow and tedious. Only

those who make such, can appreciate the difficulties of the way, the roughness of the country through which they pass, the lack of water, and the constant trouble of sand—sand in your eatables, sand in your drinkables, sand everywhere, even in your watch.

That sand is, perhaps, the most trying thing of all in African travel. Still, of course, it is not all desert. Some parts are wooded and pretty, and picturesque, too.

The lonely man ordered a halt at one of these spots.

Bushmen, lions, and leopards were reported to be in the locality; the evening was drawing on, and the angry clouds proved that a storm was near.

They had hardly formed their little camp when the storm broke over them, the natives cowering in their tents and under their waggon in abject fear.

Some of the Hottentots are very superstitious, and many thought they had encamped in an uncanny spot, and wished they had never come out with the white sportsman, who appeared to be leading them into danger, and they talked in their own language as to what he had done to anger the storm demon.

The wind howled in furious protest, the rain fairly screeched as it hurried in torrents to mother earth. No one dared expose themselves even for a moment.

The thunder crashed overhead. Great vivid forks and bars of molten fire stood out upon the blackness of the sky. Such violence of the elements had scarcely been seen before by any of those encamped there. The camp fire which had been lighted and burnt brightly was a sodden mass. The horses snorted with fear, and the oxen trembled.

Colonel Vivian used to assert that he liked a storm, but now it paled his bronzed cheeks—from no craven fear—but because during one he had satisfied himself of his wife's guilt, of her love for another man, and unfaithfulness to himself.

(To be continued.)





PATIENCE MERRICK'S FACE FLOUSHED AND HER SPEECH FALTERED AT SUCH QUICK WOOLING!

NOVELETTE.]

## A FISHER'S LASS.

—:o:—

## CHAPTER I.

It was the time of roses. June was fairly in, and vegetation was at its fullest beauty. Even by the high and rugged Northumberland coast flowers grew apace, and shrubs cast off their sturdy winterliness, and shot out little bright tips to their sombre branches.

The restless, heaving sea—here so suggestive of olden and more valourous times, when the Norsemen and Vikings struggled for victories of place on sea and shore—was quiet, ceasing from its trouble and seeming to enjoy its unwonted peace; thus giving leisure to the various members of the fisher community to look to their gear, mend their nets, renovate their cobbles, and broadly patch their brown sails, all of which they did in the open, under the warm sun rays.

The corrugated rocks at low tide were covered with holiday folk, all intent upon breathing into their lungs as much ozone as was possible.

There were old men and young, old women, girls, and children of both sexes, but alike desirous of getting all the paddling and line fishing they could.

The sound of their shrill voices mingled with the strains of a German band, which shared honours with a clever group of nigger minstrels.

Altogether the scene was enlivening, and the big waves came in with the renewing tide with a low, slumberous weight of sound that spoke to thoughtful minds of what dread power was but held in check.

One had but to cast a glance towards the House Brigades, and notice the deeply-lined faces of the fisher folk to know that this was merely for them a spell of unwonted quiet. Calm to them was not so familiar as storm.

A girl, brown, lithe, and bonnie, dressed in a fishwife's picturesque costume, stood poised on a far rock, round which the rising tide dallied with foaming pleasantries.

To any one less sure of footing her position would have been perilous; but this sea-maiden was outlined against the vivid sky and glancing waves, and her upright, well poised figure never swerved an inch.

She was looking out to sea under the small penthouse she made of her supple brown fingers.

Her abundant yellow hair lay on the nape of her neck in a heavy plaited coil, and was kept in place by a pink ribbon, which matched the colour of her loose printed bodice to a nicety.

She wore no head covering, but over one arm hung a silk kerchief, which doubtless did duty on occasion.

Her many-tucked serge skirt was full and round, displaying a remarkably handsome pair of ankles clothed in ribbed stockings of home manufacture, and feet with insteps that spoke mutely of high breeding.

This is by no means uncommon, and nowhere is a free gait more noticeable than in the hardy fishwives of our upper coast.

Patience Merrick started and uttered a sharp ejaculation of disapproval as one wave, bolder than the rest, leaped her tidy feet and thoroughly soaked the tightly-strained worsted stockings.

In her anxiety she had miscalculated the time, and too late, looking resentfully at the sinking sun, saw her mistake. Not a moment must be lost if she was to regain the headland without a further wetting.

Turning impatiently round she came face to face with a dark skinned, handsome young fellow, who stood on an inner rock. He leaned towards her with extended arms.

"Take my hand," he said, eagerly. "Jump, and you are safe."

"Safe!" she laughed, and was beside him in a flash, just as another wave curled over

the spot she had quitted. It soughed away in trickling eddies, and she laughed again, and then caught up her breath in angry petulance.

"See," she said, in not amiable tones, "what a mess I'm in, and we were going to Newcastle if they'd only come in time."

Once more she put her curved hand across her forehead and scanned the horizon with unblinking eyes.

"No," her voice trembling, "they are not coming."

"Who are they?" asked the man who had so opportunely come to her rescue.

For the first time she appeared to take him into some sort of recognition, looked full at his eager face, and answered,—

"Why, father, and Jem, and Tom, of course."

"And you are disappointed?"

Her full richly-tinted throat throbbed convulsively, but she did not deign to answer this absurd query.

An insane jealousy possessed the man; perhaps one of these rough, unkempt fisher-fellows was her lover. He had been watching her for an hour or more, and she was far more beautiful on a nearer view than even when speeding among the rocks, and poised on that distant one which now was almost covered by the swelling tide.

She was the very ideal of a free-born, untamed sea-woman—lovely, and lithe, and brown; but what puzzled him was that her speech was not so rough, nor her dialect so pronounced as others of her kind hereabouts.

Perhaps she had been more tenderly nurtured, or had been partly brought up away from the fisher folk. She may have been inland a good deal, or educated at some superior school—that is for her class.

In each and all of these surmises Richard Herringly was right.

"Who are Jem and Tom?" he asked.

Instead of answering now, she cried, "Jump!" for another drenching threatened.

"Once more out of danger," she said, coolly, but a rosy flush mounted on the deliciously tanned skin; "Jem's the eldest, Tom's the youngest of us three."

"They are only your brothers, then?"

"Only my brothers!" she pouted; "but that I am very cross with them now and with the plucky fish, and the spring-tide, and everything. I'd take some time to tell you what fine lads they are. Hereabouts anybody'll tell you so much of the Merriks."

"I don't want other people to tell me anything about you. See, another wave! If we gain that high point we can sit down, and you can give me all the information I want."

"People don't always get everything they want," with sudden upspringing coquetry.

"No? I always do."

She was rather quipped, but preened on her way from rock to rock till the broad beach he had pointed out was reached. Then she glanced at him with puzzled curiosity in her deep saucy grey eyes.

Eccentric eyes they were, deep and luminous. For a moment they gazed at him with undimmed interest, and then she said slowly,—

"That's a proud thing to say, that you always get everything you want."

"You will find it so, Miss Merrick."

She made an impatient movement.

"Don't call me Miss Merrick, please."

"I am afraid your disposition does not fit your name," he remarked, not veiling the admiration he felt for her remarkable beauty. Indeed, he scanned her critically, and more—she was not offended.

"Well?" she said, a warm blush mounting to the fringe of yellow hair on the low forehead.

"I think you are the most beautiful woman I ever saw, Patience Merrick. You stir my imagination, and send my fancy back to olden times when these coasts were rampant with heroes who dared everything for oblation of their own. You must have the blood of Vikings and sea-kings in your veins."

She glowed with pleasure, and a wild untamable light sprang into the deep eyes in whose greyness was now a red tinge or disc that rounded the full iris, and seemed to gleam defiance at him.

"No," she said, slowly, "I am not, patient. I would like to have lived in those desperate times when men fought and women loved the bravest. Now men are minikins; some would faint at the sight of a raised battle-axe and shrink from the touch of blood. Why," drawing up her form with indomitable pride, "my ancestors waded in blood to obtain their rights on this very headland. You may read of it, an' you care!"

She turned lightly away with a careless disdain that fascinated her companion more than anything more winning could have done.

This woman was worth the struggle for strength; he would to tame that restless spirit. Love with such a woman would be a fiery draught of rich ripe wine that to quaff was delicious.

"Stay!" he said, "are we not to rest here?"

She shrugged her shapely shoulders as if it were a matter of small moment. But she dropped into a sitting posture.

"What's that now?" she asked, stretching out a supple hand towards his sketch-book, out of which one sketch was falling. "Are you one of them drawing gentlemen as makes pictures of us?"

He looked at her in some amusement. It would be well, perhaps, she should think so.

"So many do you see?" she said, simply, "but mind, if you've been talking me in this rig idian's in proper trim for a show picture, and my coat ain't set nor nothing, you know we was going pleasuring."

Once more the voice dropped into childish petulance, and rendered her more commonplace in his estimation—more accessible.

The romance of the Vikings dwindled away, leaving only to his hand a fisher lass, who may

or may not have been born of this valiant race.

He gave her the rough sketch he had made, as she stood, poised lightly, looking out to sea.

She examined it closely, and then handed it back, saying,—

"It's all wrong somehow."

"You do not feel flattered?" he asked.

"No," she said, shortly; "but you can try again."

"What is wrong in this?" holding out the sketch for further inspection. "The light on the sea is—"

She broke in with a scornful, rippling laugh.

"Was it the sea you were drawing? Then it don't matter that my looks are all askew, that there's no wind in my skirts or loose bosom, that there's a goat-ripple on the waves, that there's—"

"You are pleased to be called, Patience Merrick."

"Well, it's myself I'm speaking about, you see," she said, truly. "So many have drawn me, and on such a rough basis. Why, I'm in a gallery to Newcastle. One don't care to be made a mock of—like this."

## CHAPTER II.

RICHARD HARRINGBY hardly understood himself when he was talking to the fishermaid, Patience Merrick. His blood was in an excited ferment. He usually so cool and collected, was in a whirl of heated, delicious fancy that threatened death to all ordinary occupation and calm methods of life.

Her eyes haunted him, try to forget her as he would. Still those wonderful grey orbs persistently challenged him to combat their force.

Day and night he had no respite from her weird fascination. There was that about her which utterly precluded the sort of devotion he was accustomed to lay at the feet of other women—women of his own class, too, but of different calibre, to this hardy nurtured child of the Vikings, as he grew to call her in his thoughts.

This by turns pleased, flattered and irritated him. He admired innocence in the abstract, still innocence was sometimes perplexing.

That he was fairly caught, smitten in love, he did not attempt to deny. It was not his habit to palliate any of his erotic feelings, or to ponder to what of conscience he possessed.

By nature he was calculating and resolute, and had been quite within the truth in stating to Patience Merrick that he always had what he wanted.

Whether he would do so in this instance he began to ask himself, with more and more doubt as to the result. But the insecurity only egged on the faster his irresistible desire to make this wild, untamed, ocean-born child his. But how?

Needless to say, he had already deceived her, or rather had allowed her to deceive herself as to his social position. For he was no artist in the light she considered—the class as a working and money-making community.

He was well-bred—as upper middle class goes—rich, an only child, and burdened with but one embargo—to marry a certain cousin of his who was equally rich and an only child.

With this family decree he had fallen in easily enough since, truth to tell, marriage to his ideas ranked, merely, as a code—a consequent detail in a man's chart of life, and he liked his cousin well enough.

He took elaborate pains to complete his sketch of Patience Merrick, for his strong will was opposed to giving up original desires. And he very much desired to draw her as he had first seen her outlined against the summer sky.

To try again, as she had so carefully suggested, did not suit his imperious, over-bearing temperament. He would compel that first conception to suit his whim.

At last he was fairly well satisfied. There was no "askewness" in the upright, rock-poised figure; there was wind in the drapery—some in the simplicity of the picture.

He went to the gallery she had named at Newcastle, and fell more in love with her than ever when he saw what a true artist could make of her unusual type.

The picture was for sale—he bought it. But on hearing of this Patience Merrick was not pleased.

"And now," was her pouting comment, "I shall be hung there for folks to see."

Richard Herringby bit his lip, but would not show the chagrin he felt. This sort of treatment was novel. It roused him more than any more complete action would have done.

"No, Patience," he said, "but you will be hung in my home for me to look at. Will not that be equally well for you?"

This was more than a week after their first meeting, and the sweetness and strangeness of a first love was drawing on the young soul of the sea maiden so that she blushed divinely under her master's eyes. That was it—to all whom Richard Herringby loved he was true.

Yet there was inherent in this northern-bred daughter of a simple fisherman a resilience of nobility which held him in check in spite of himself. The humbleness of love was revealed to him for the first time in his experience of the passion.

It was a new thing, therefore to be met and grappled with till he had subdued or conquered it. Everything—even love—must bend to his will—bend or break. He must possess this woman. She must be his—at any cost. It was come to that with him—at any cost. "Eren," he muttered between his clenched teeth, "if I marry her!"

"Tell me about your home," she said, a touch of wistfulness in her clear, fearless tones. "You have a nice name—Roland Harper. Is your home nice, and where is it now?"

"Well," he laughed, "I hardly know whether you would call it nice or not. Tastes and ideas differ so. It's a set of chambers in Regent's-park, and I've some more in Paris."

He had not even the grace to blush as he thought of his real name and of his home proper under his parent's roof in the Midlands.

"What's chambers, meant?" asked the unsophisticated fisher-girl, "and where's Regent's-park? I know Paris is across there," flinging out her loose-sleeved arm seaward.

"Chambers are sets of bachelor rooms, child. Very comfortable, although scarcely fit for a lady perhaps. But men are as right as a trivet in them. Anyhow, mine are home to me—at present."

"And then?" She was not bashful in asking questions. It seemed to her so natural that in "keeping company" she should by rights know his mode of life—that far-away life which she dimly understood to be something widely different from life that she was familiar with.

There was a delicious strangeness and unreality about everything appertaining to this lover of hers. Even his dream attitudes, and speech were to her subjects of awakened and very keen curiosity.

He looked at her—at the inquiring, intelligent face, the well-built, lithe figure, the delicate supple hands that might never have known rough toil though kissed brown by the sun rays, at the superbly arched feet in their trim coverings.

A gust of wind off the sea blew the yellow fringe of hair into pretty confusion, on the broad, low and very white forehead, and detached in sheer wantonness a stray plait that fell on her shoulders in a heavy streak of golden splendour.

What a length it was, and how the wind loved to displace the binding that held it!

He mischievously loosened the pink ribbon



and pulled out two or three hairpins of portentous length and thickness, and down came the mass about her ears in bewildering dishevelment—hair that might well "entangle a man's fancy and never let him go again."

He was in the mood for dalliance, and "the place and the hour" was dangerously propitious. Her beauty dazzled him in the lone solitude of the summer beach, and produced sensations within him altogether apart from any women had hitherto awakened.

It was the most subtle hour of the peaceful, radiant June evening—that hour just before the gloaming—and the sun was sinking into the sea in a myriad of prismatic colours—colours which the boundless expanse of glittering waters intensified till it tired the human eye to sort them. The wide stretch of sand beyond Whitley and Cultercoats was deserted at this hour far more lively and human than nearer the town. These two were virtually alone with nature, and with nature in her most seductive and melting mood.

"And then, my sweet," answered Richard Herringly, softly, "will be a change when you come to me—as come you will. Nay, start not, Bonnie, everything the world holds of sweetness shall be ours if only you will be mine."

A surging wave of deepest colour flashed the fair sunburnt face of the fisher-maid, and her speech faltered for very shame at such quick wooing.

"It is too soon," she whispered, "too soon." But his arms were around her; never before had any man but her father or brothers kissed her.

"Can any human joy, Patience Merrick, come too soon?" he asked, releasing her that he might the better see the wealth of undimmed innocent beauty that was his.

Amongst the rocks on that free open coast are many cosy nooks made as if for Cupid's very hiding-places, and in one our lovers nestled, their troth plighted, their vows—true at least on one side, and faithful unto death—uttered. The unbroken glory of shore-line and trackless sea, flecked with tanned sails and distant smoke-lines of passing steamers, was impressively grand in the dying light. It was a day closing in dream-like delight to Patience Merrick. To the depths of her soul—and she had a soul as yet untainted by the world or suspicion of evil—she was stirred with a softening refinement of infinite pleasures.

Her nature expanded under love's gracious touch, and her sweet mobile lips trembled with the exquisite bliss she was too proud to hide.

It was late for these regular-living, early-to-bed and early-to-rise fisher-folk when Patience Merrick, her eyes agleam in the moonlight, entered the humble but cleanly best room of her father's house. Her brothers, mending nets on the doorway, saluted her as she passed with casual words on the fineness of the night, and both afterwards marvelled they had not taken more notice of her charmed radiance—for thus it was she struck them—as she sprang across the heap of brown netting they were busy upon. After—when their aged father was laid beside his wife in the quiet burying-ground, and their sister Patience, the bells of the dusky Tyne, was missing still, and her name a byword and reproach in men's mouths—they thought humbly of those things.

## CHAPTER II.

"Well, Bella, I cannot say I feel at all comfortable. You say Richard was coming last Thursday; your birthday was Friday. Now more than a week has elapsed, and we do not even hear again from him, although," fanning herself vigorously, "we are beset with this exceedingly disagreeable rumour concerning his whereabouts."

The mother and daughter were sitting together in a handsome house at Queen's Gate, Kensington. The elder lady was Richard Herringly's aunt, and the younger was his cousin and fiancée.

"It may be only a rumour, mamma. People," with some heat, "are so ready to talk, to tattle, even about which they know nothing. For instance, this interfering little upstart, Mrs. Holland, can hardly know Dick by sight. His personality is by no means uncommon, and we may be supposed to think her short-sighted, as she makes such a parade of wearing eye-glasses."

"You need not be so touchy, child. It is for your own good I am speaking, and Richard really is very—hesitating, and fanning away still more energetically, 'very erratic, to say the least of it. It is, as your father says, quite time he settled down. When once you are married, Bella, you must not be too easy."

"I hope I shall never be a tiresomely inquisitive wife, mamma!"

This struck home a little hardly, and Mrs. Herringly shut her fan with a sharp click, which threatened dissolution to the pearl and gold sticks.

She still looked, as she certainly felt, doubtful. It was not only Mrs. Holland who had seen Richard in Paris with a girl of such extraordinary beauty that she was the talk of the Boulevards.

She was not other than worldly herself, and, as a rule, tolerant to such things, but where her daughter and only child was concerned, it behoved her to feel differently.

Young men would be young men, but this was rather too much of a good thing. Richard should show some respect to his family, and not so thoughtlessly risk his connubial interests.

Who could this creature be with whom he had become entangled?

From a private source she had ascertained that she was quite unknown. She was not an actress, nor a singer, nor an artist, nor anything of woman-kind known to Paris and its habitués. She was too young to be another man's runaway wife. What was she?

That no one could tell her, and Mrs. Robert Herringly, with an undiscovered secret to unravel, was not an agreeable person to live with, as her husband and child too often found to their cost.

The whisper grew apace that Mr. Richard Herringly was at Paris; to be seen openly there, in the Bois and elsewhere, with the most beautiful woman of the season.

As Mrs. Holland said, "He noticed no one; had not even bowed to her, for he was too much engrossed."

This was all very well, but why did he not return home, as by his mother's letter he had not—or, better still, why did he not turn up at Queen's Gate?

It was a question utterly beyond Bella's power to answer, and she was inwardly revolving the problem in her mind when who should walk in unconcerned but her cousin Richard.

Both ladies started up guiltily with unruffled exclamations of "Oh, Richard!"

He kissed his well-preserved, handsome aunt, and then likewise saluting his future wife, said laughingly,—

"You look flushed. By Jove! how hot it is. Why are you staying in town so long? Every one should be out of it by—what's the date—the tenth of July."

It was the tenth of July, and both of them eagerly explained that they were only awaiting his advent to leave for the sea-side, and proposed a stoppage at Dun Hall, his father's place in the shires, on the way.

"Right you are," he answered, nonchalantly, "I am entirely at your service," and "heaven forgive me the lie," he added, sotto voce.

"It was Bella's birthday Friday," said his aunt, and he easily detected the resentment in her tone. "Your uncle was very vexed you were not here."

"Your birthday, Bella!" he said, with well-acted surprise. "Well," laughing again, "since I never by any chance recollect my own, I must be forgiven the omission. I will buy you a bracelet before to-morrow's sun sets, and

as for letter writing, you have foregone my sins in that direction ages ago. I can't letter write, from my soul I can't."

"All is forgiven, dear," said Bella, prettily, "and to continue the agony column formula, consider yourself taken back to the arms of your suffering family."

How easily women forgive a scape-grace male acquaintance is proverbial. And when the scape-grace is a near relation, a very popular member of their own especial set—and a lover, to boot, with how much more facility the object is effaced.

"Now what's up?" was our scape-grace's mental reservation. "Just how much have they heard? I flatter myself I have taken the wind out of maiden Holland's sails, and I've fairly routed old Sutherly, one of the partners in the firm, and he who had given Mrs. Herringly her private information, and the deuce is in it; but I can tackle these two. The interest is working up; I begin to scent enjoyment."

He thought Bella was looking uncommonly well, considering the trying weather, and complimented on her dress—a delicate liberty silk of electric blue which suited her freckled fairness better than some tints she particularly affected.

"And where have you been?" asked his aunt, still with that shade of suspicious displeasure.

"Ah," he said, leaning back on his settee the better to enjoy his evident amusement, "herein lies a puzzle, the which, fair dames, I will communicate unto you. I have been having a gallop through Lakeland with Tommy Godolphin, and I've done the northern coast—which is much over-rated, let me warn you—and I've shot sea-birds at the Farnes, and yet within the last six hours I have been credibly informed by two distinct busy-bodies—not to say noodles—Sutherly and your delectable friend Mrs. Holland, that I have been at Paris with the most superbly lovely siren that the world has heard of since Troy!"

To hear that little eye-glassed and befrilled fool dilate on the charms of this unknown was enough to madden a fellow that such a paragon existed, and that he did not possess it.

"Listen! She was fair though sunburnt, and most divinely tall. She had eyes the like of which I have never read out of the 'Arabian Nights.' She was peculiar, she was—well, in fact, she is a complete *rara avis*; and fancy! do condescend with me, Bella! I have missed her, since she is roaming the universe with my double."

By the bye, what is that theory about every one of us possessing a double—don't Wilkie Collins wrangle it out in some of his novels?

Bella laughed, although a quivering sigh escaped her, and her mother echoed it by another, decidedly more of the panting, correct-confined order, and the glib narrator made another mental comment,—

"That will do for the present."

Two days passed, and the party came, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Herringly, their daughter and her lover were travelling in a Pullman car to Dun Hall, which is situate not far from Peterboro'.

As luck, chance, or "private arrangement" had it, Richard Herringly had only been in lover-like attendance on Bella, under his parent's roof-tree, for three more days ere he was summoned peremptorily to town on some of Tommy Godolphin's business.

"The plague take that fellow!" was his remark, on reading the urgent telegram and tossing it over to Bella; "he is always in some beastly scrape or other."

"But he is so good-hearted, Dick."

"Yes, he's all that, and as he's helped me round a few tight corners, I suppose I must run up. Travelling per-rail," yawning, "is such a fog in the dog days."

"You must go, dear," urged Bella, who was not an exacting person, nor possessed of any uncomfortable jealousy. "I daresay you can

get back"—to use one of his own expressions—"in a brace of shakes."

"All very fine, he takes things uncommon easy, let me tell you, does that rattlepole Master Tommy."

"Do go," laughed Bella. "I always quake lest that awful guardian of his should get hold of some of his misdeemeanours, and then you know," coaxingly, "Nelly could never hope to marry him."

Richard looked thoughtful.

"I suppose she is still as fond of him as ever?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! Dick, and she is such a charming little thing and my greatest friend, as you know, so do go and be a 'mischief gap.' I wonder what it is now, the Derby or Ascot, or—"

"I say, Bella, you are getting much too knowing here. Kiss me; if I am to go I must be off. I shall just catch the six express."

Bella in her innocence bustled about to expedite her lover's departure, even remarking how fortunate it was he was properly dressed instead of lolling about in flannels, as he had been yesterday.

"You might as well drive me to the station and see the last of me, Bella; it's a perfect nuisance being hustled about like this. The sooner Nelly Fargon marries Tommy and looks after him herself the better, I say."

As they drove along the pleasant country roads Mr. Richard was in uncommonly good spirits considering he was so put about by his absent friend's peccadilloes.

He was very talkative and gallant to the pretty girl he was so soon to marry, and amused her very much by assuring her that she was a brick, and just the very essence of what a fellow's wife ought to be.

"Am I?" she asked, pleased at his curious compliment, and detecting in it no hidden meaning. "Why?"

"Oh!" conscience sending a tinge of red into his cheeks, "I don't know; you are so jolly amiable, just like your father. I hate a jealous peevy woman, like your mother, for instance, who can never let a fellow stir from her side without asking him a million questions. Poor old chap, sometimes I wonder how he bears it so well."

"She is very trying," allowed Bella, with a tired, little sigh; "but you see," determined not to be downhearted, "I don't need to interrogate you when I know your destination. Some day," shyly, "I may develop into quite a nuisance that way."

"Heaven forbid!" was his pious ejaculation.

#### CHAPTER IV.

MRS. ROLAND HAD paced the small lawn of her pretty riverside house at Kew. More beautiful than ever she looked under her new accessories of fresh belongings and matronly dignity.

The sturdy keenness of the sea still seemed to cling about her singular personality and lift her above and beyond her luxurious but common-place surroundings.

She was revelling still in unaffected surprise at every novel sight which met her eye. She was more than charmed with the soft richness of her chosen locality.

The wealth of riverside verdure was a glory to her which she was never tired of contemplating, and would sit for hours watching the passing and repassing of craft from her vantage of lawn by the "water-way," as she quaintly called it.

This water-way and its pleasure-seekers and workers thereon were so entirely apart from her former knowledge of the bolder sea life. Here was no fear of sea wrack and boiling foam and stress of wild endeavour. The grandeur she scarcely missed as yet.

It is natural for all young things to enjoy what is fresh, and Patience drank in experience with a strong vigorous sentiment which was quite a part of her nature.

In just the same measure had she enjoyed Paris, and had more than once vaguely offended her husband, that anything should divert her mind from themselves and their love for an instant.

He could not always follow her leaps and bounds of keen, rushing appreciation, nor understand her ecstatic wonderments at what to him were used up sensations.

Not yet had the finsel of mere worldly delights palled upon her unjaded senses, and, unlike most brides, she saw nothing to cavil at in her husband's absence.

Had he not told her from the very first that she would be much alone in the home he should give her?

And it was a pure delight to her to have the charming little house-nest to herself. She could the better revel in its many luxuries, and accustom herself to its refinements and endless surprises.

She had always been used to live much alone, and when Roland was away she could do much more freely many things that in some measure were distasteful to him.

For instance, he would have demurred at her active propensities for many departments of household work, etc.

She had been gardening—not the fine lady gardening which obtains with the mistresses of such homes as a rule, but her two hand-maidens had stared in astonishment to see her dig, and hoe, and rake—laughing to herself all the time as if such labour was a positive relief and relaxation to her.

To be sure, for Ronald's sake, she encoined her supple hands in leather gloves, for Patience had never—in the old days—been unmindful of her personal attributes.

Refinement and delicacy of apparel came to her naturally and with no vulgarity. Even her speech lent itself easily to being remodelled under her improved circumstances.

She had always been fond of reading, and had followed it more than most girls of her class, so it was small wonder that now she picked up much useful knowledge that stood her in good stead from the ephemeral literature of the day.

Although only a fisher-maid, the names of modern writers were not unfamiliar to her, and now she could read their works with comparative understanding.

She had, too, now a boudoir, and wore tea gowns and *lingerie*, to say nothing of some very fine rings and Paris bonnets.

Happiness was not the word for her supreme satisfaction, and it was pathetic the way in which she industriously sought out useful, practical information from all and any books of fashionable life that came to her hand, and the clever way she compared notes and adapted similarities to her own surroundings was extremely noteworthy.

She spared no trouble that nothing she did should strike her lover as incongruous. She, the descendant of a handsome, fearless race, and proved to the core of that same, must not be vanquished by mere worldly conventionalities.

There was in her an inherent self-respect, a native nobility, coupled with untiring industry, that tidied her over many what to others of weaker calibre would have been awkward moments.

Her gardening finished, she had dressed, giving minute attention to sundry details which her lord was so keen to notice, and a more winsome picture could hardly have been looked upon than she presented when he entered the garden gate and came across the tree-shaded vista of lawn to greet her fair lips with kisses.

A china-blue dimity robe with hanging laces and broad rich ribbons threw up her radiant youth to perfection. The creamy *bolignese* underneath the trailing skirt made the arched feet look smaller than ever in their Parisian shoes, whilst the abundant yellow hair gleamed like Australian gold under the diligent tendence now bestowed upon it. For a freak she had piled it high on the head, with grotesque

combs to sustain its weight, and for a moment Roland disapproved; it made her look too commanding, too queenly; but as he saw the tender undergrowth of rippling curls at the nape of the well-set neck, he passed favourable judgment.

"By the bye, Patience," was his first laconic remark, "you don't look as if you had been grieving for me; perhaps you have enjoyed your lonely state?"

"And that's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, sir," she answered, briskly, by no means abashed by his slightly jealous mood.

"How well the garden looks," at which she clapped her palms together and laughed, hugging her innocent secret. "And, darling, tell me you care for it all once more, and that you will not weary for the sea."

A mistiness that threatened overflow refused the grey eyes, now so limpid with the very gratification of love, and for a moment she could not command her voice.

They were sitting under a spreading acacia tree, and were as much alone as leafy and walled in solitude could make them.

"I don't crave for the sea as I did at Trouville," she said, presently, "but that sea was so garish and stupid." Then dashing her hand across her treacherous tears, she cried, "but dear, I want father, and Jem, and Tom to see my home. How proud and glad they will be, and the lads shall row me right away up the river; doesn't it look lovely now? All I want to content me is that they too should share my good fortune—that they should come here and see me as I am."

She spoke with innocent pride, glancing round her prized domain with a fascinating air of proprietorship. A little cloud settled on the fair face, and she stirred slightly on the garden chair, and said, irritably,—

"I can't think though, Roland, why they don't write; it worries me a bit—worries me, I mean," biting her rich full underlips.

"You must give them time, my pet, to get over your cavalier departure; they will write all in good time."

He did not tell her that he had never posted her letters to them.

"And come here?" she asked, drawing him impulsively to her side.

She was conscious of the sudden chill of his manner, and for the first time a shadow of distrust crossed the deceptive brightness of her path.

She started up, and roamed the cramped expanse of greensward, looking like a brilliant caged bird in her lightning distress.

"Dear!" she said, pantingly, facing him suddenly, and compelling his eyes to meet hers fully, "you don't know them—how good and staunch and brave they are, and how they love me. If you are cold to them I think I should—kill you."

Her face was deadly pale, and red discs rounded the grey pupils and seemed to unnaturally dilate them. All at once she softened and laughed gaily, just as a little child who was playacting and suddenly threw off the mask might have laughed.

"What am I saying?" darting down beside him. "As if, dear," pressing her rich and scented lips to his, "I could ever do that or anything to hurt my love, my love, my dear, dear love."

She burst into uncontrollable weeping, but only for a brief space. Like a summer shower, a fresh breeze sprang up and lo! it was passed away and she was her gayest self again, all eagerness to lead him into the house that he might see the placement of the heaps of dainty and fanciful knick-knacks which had come on his order during his week's absence. "You see," she said, naively, as she flitted from one dainty room to another, "it has kept me so busy that I have not had time to miss you."

He was rather grave under her contradictions. Her swift transitions were a revelation to him, and this air of domesticity was in itself a trifling perplexing. Somehow



he had not exactly bargained for it—had thought only of a secluded ideal sort of existence—but she took it all as a matter of course. She was uncomfortably literal.

But the glamour of her presence, the exquisite excitement of her nearness and touch dispelled the cloud on his spirit, and the day ended in a tranquil calm which mortals rarely have vouchsafed to them but for a short span. There was, as yet, no presage of storm, nothing to disturb the stillness of bliss as the quiet days went on—such days as married lovers seldom prize highly enough, for the afterwalk is like to be as bitter as gall to the palate. When "hot, passionate love," said to be "like summer dust," and as easily dispersed, is swept aside by adverse winds of intolerance, familiarity, *cuncti*. What, let me ask, is there left?

## CHAPTER V.

LITTLE Nelly Fargon, as she was mostly called, was certainly very far gone in love for reckless, dare-devil, good-hearted Tommy Godolphin. Her mischievous lips would set firmly whenever any of his hair-brained exploits were talked of and condemned.

But her crusty old uncle and guardian could never gainsay the undeniable fact that Tommy was a gentleman, and that his mad freaks were never other than the outcome of an extraordinary flow of youthful animal spirits.

Herein was her power, and Mr. Henry Fargon being very much under her small thumb, despite his overbearing attitude in City offices and elsewhere, was often forced into an untenable position which did not improve his temper.

He and Mr. Robert Herringly had close business relations, and were also personal friends of long standing, but Mr. Fargon sternly objected to Mrs. Robert, and many were the word-tiffs between the two, the lady mostly coming off victor, because her opponent being nothing himself if not a gentleman, could not indulge—with a woman—in his usual method of talking, not to say blustering, down an argument.

He would retire in peppery dudgeon, and vent his spleen, as such men always do, upon the helpless home powers, represented in this case by his niece and ward, Nelly, as mischievous and gay-hearted a little fairy as ever disdained to knuckle under to a stern guardian.

Nelly was merry and wise, but never gave in. She knew, because Tommy said so, that staying power always told in the long run.

"I suppose we must go, 'Bee,'" Mr. Fargon's pet name for his domestic tyrant; "but, hang me if I can stand that woman for more than a week. I wonder, now, what induced Bob Herringly to marry her? How Bella's like him," gathering up the spilt masses of a too cruelly smashed egg.

"Yes, indeed, she is," said Nelly, with an inward determination to make the best of things and get her uncle off to Dun Hall as soon as possible. "But Mrs. Herringly is very nice sometimes, and I am sure Dick's mother is a dear old thing, and it's awfully good of her to invite us down just now. You were only saying yesterday how intolerable town was."

"Humph!"

"And I am sure it is," innocently. "You are quite right about that."

"And about a good deal more," granted he, glancing at his small companion under his unequal shaggy brows.

Nellie always wondered why he did not let the barber sing off some of those tantalising eyebrows. She little knew that, deprived of those telling adornments, he would not have been the terror he was on certain board days and committee meetings.

"Here's Richard up in town again about that rascal's escapades. A nice one he is too—a pretty pair. The sooner he's married to

Bella the better. She's a sensible girl, and there's nothing like matrimony for steadying a young fellow."

"No?" said Nelly, sweetly.

Mr. Fargon saw his mistake and buried himself diligently in the money article for the next five minutes, during which the little pass amused herself by re-reading a characteristic letter of Fanny's, and laughing in her sleeve at the inadvertent admission aforesaid.

"Then I shall be dreadfully busy packing to-day, 'Waspy,'" which was her pet name for her irascible relation, "and I suppose we must go by the 12.20. Tommy says that Dick and he will join us at Euston."

"The deuce they will! I suppose the counting house and shipping interests can go and hang. How do I know that I can get away? Why, I have only just read the invitation!" flipping the open epistle beside his breakfast plate. "And it's rather uncommon that you've got all your gimcracks ready at a moment's notice!"

"Not at all," said Nelly, sweetly, but with quite an injured air; "since more than a fortnight ago you bid me be prepared to start off out of this infernal heat at a moment's notice, and," laughing at his shocked look, "you know your word is law."

"Humph! we shall see about that. I haven't come to the bottom of this last scrape of your precious lover's yet, miss."

"It is only about a wretched horse," elevating her dark eyebrows, one of which was slightly uneven with the other, and so gave to the piquant little face an irresistibly droll expression when she chose, "that was so utterly stupid as not to get a place. He's told me all about it—what is it you call it—pulled?"

Now Mr. Fargon had loved the turf, and even now was said to surreptitiously hanker after its delights, and this Miss Nelly quite well knew.

As an inquisitor she was merciless.

"It's the same nasty beast!" she went on, with sympathetic zeal, "that you lost such a lump over—"

"How the—"

"Did I know?" casually. "Oh! I heard you talking about it last night to Mr. Sutherly. I fancy," putting on a sage look, "that he is dipped, too. What fun! because he's always so cocksure about everything—"

"Nelly, from whom do you learn such slang?"

"Well," she pouted, "see what he said about Dick Herringly being in Paris. He'll be swearing next that Tommy was there with another wonderful woman. Uncle, I think Mr. Sutherly's just the nastiest old man I know! He ought to be labelled, 'Liar—purlblind—dangerous!' If people are not sure of their eyesight they shouldn't say things, especially old men—and they do say, mind you that when he was young himself he was downright horrid!"

"Stuff!"

But Mr. Fargon was fairly nonplussed and rose in a tremendous bustle to be off, and Nelly was far too astute a strategist to inquire again what their movements were to be.

He had puffed and pshawed himself through the hall and opened the brougham door, before he condescended to say—returning ignominiously for that purpose—

"Then we go down to-morrow?"

"If you can get away, dear," said she, with amiable hypocrisy; "at any rate, I will be ready."

And so the next morning another party of four started, per Pullman car, for Dun Hall, and it is time to introduce Mr. Tommy Godolphin.

He and Richard Herringly were waiting on the platform when Nelly Fargon and her uncle arrived.

No one would be likely to forget Tommy Godolphin who had seen him once, and there were times he found this amazingly awkward, whereas Richard Herringly justified Bella's statement of unmarked personality.

His clear, sallow skin, and closely-cropped

dark hair, and black eyes might have appertained to another dozen young Englishmen even on this teeming platform. There was nothing about him uncommon, and yet no one would deny the fact that he was good-looking, or at least handsome, for the terms are not always synonymous.

But Tommy Godolphin's good-humoured phiz, with its merry, twinkling eyes set a bit too close together over a nondescript sort of nose, which he dignified by the term of snout, was unmistakable, meet him where you would. Even at private theatricals he had given up trying to disguise himself, since even as a "cowed monk" somebody shrieked out, "Hallo! there's Tommy."

"What an awfully plain man!" was a common enough expression, and then, sure as fate, would come the addendum of some flattering make-weight to their first opinion. There was that about Tommy which men invariably took to and women felt the charm of. To the latter his every word seemed a caress, and his manner coincided, and this without the slightest taint of vulgarity.

His "thatch," as he called what of tow-coloured hair Nature had scrubbingly endowed him with, was always averse to laying straight, brush it which way he would, and of facial hairsuit appendages he had none.

This was his prime grievance, for Tommy would have given worlds for a fine moustache, and had laboured hard and spent pounds on hairwashes to effect the desired end. He even diligently studied certain columns in the fashion journals of the day, and wrote numberless serpentine letters in answer to alluring advertisements. To one enterprising female he disbursed seven-and-sixpence, obtaining in exchange a vile smelling powder which made his upper lip raw, and which his chemist pronounced to be a—depilatory.

"Yes," said the hapless victim, hopelessly, and then a light dawned upon him that he had got mixed somehow. But it was a standing joke against Tommy ever after.

He was of middle height, with rather a short neck, set just a trifle low into excellent shoulders.

Tommy was a born athlete, and had his innings of universal admiration in all outdoor vocations, whereas he could don the only garb that really became him—flannels.

Of these he had a portentous array of every degree of texture and design. Wonderful were the shirts, striped coats, sashes, and neck-cloths Godolphin's portmanteaus discharged on given occasions and according to his erratic humour, as he would array himself without much regard to what club colours he ought to sport for that especial match.

But every athletic secretary tolerated his vagaries, for he was always open-handed and "Hail fellow, well met!" no matter what his get-up.

One time he would declare, on being remonstrated with, "that he'd be shot if he could have played in crimson," and another he would deplore his inability to "risk his complexion under a mustard and green combination," and when any difficulty of decision occurred it was ten to one but he appeared—radiantly happy and fit as a fiddler—in a haze of light blue, which certainly, as the ladies always agreed, "suited him down to the ground."

Such was Nelly's lover, and even Mr. Fargon gave in to his jovial flow of animal spirits, as they met en route for Peterboro'.

"Bless the lad!" he said, aghast at seeing the mountain of athletic impediments this gentleman had in charge of a porter; "due at fourteen cricket matches in the dog days! This is the upstart of public schools."

## CHAPTER VI.

DUN HALL was a handsome old residence of red brick, with many high, narrow windows in the front facing the high road. On one side round the first story was a broad stone balcony, flanked by a huge oriel window, which

appertained to the drawing-room proper, but inside was partially cut off by a pillared entrance and massive velvet portiere. The smoke thus formed was almost a separate room, and even when three deep settees and a damasker palm were taken into account, there was yet ample room to swing the proverbial cat. On one of these inviting seats reclined Tommy Godolphin and Nelly Fargson, and they were busy talking—this pair of lovers always talked energetically—of Richard Harrington and Bella.

"No," said brightly, quick-witted Nelly, "you may say that you will, Tommy, but does not love very hot, for instance, poisoning his car viciously, 'as you love me, he said—what shall I tell it—well, too handsome in his manner."

"Tommy sat bolt upright and started."

"I can't find a better term, dear, and some day after next February, you know—well, say three months after next February—well, I dare a bit to tell about a living summer afternoon like this with me, without even one cigar, too; and with those two, 'speculatively,' 'it has come to that now. Why,' very confidentially, and smooching up closer to Tommy, 'this very morning, not having you to see after, I had nothing to do but watch them, and although it was a bit mean, I did. Well, he was for all I ever so long on one end of that cosy garden chair—you know our chair, Tommy—and he sat half a yard apart from her. She poked up the gravel with the butt end of her parasol, and he smoked; and once he got up and went off—if you'll credit it—to the paddock fence to watch two Irish cows chewing the cud most dirty creatures."—Miss Nelly had few strictly pastoral or rural tastes—"and when she strolled lazily back again he just quitted down in the seat he had quitted, and never even kissed her. 'Now, Tommy,' solemnly, 'that's how you'll behave some after we are married. I don't think you'll mean it, the least little tiny bit, but somehow the same result always happens. For every dozen kisses I get now—for I try to keep count as well as I can—I always think to myself, 'after we are married I shall get one string-kiss when he leaves me, and perhaps one just like it when he returns.'"

"But you'll think it, eh, Nelly?"

"Of course. I'm only reasoning the thing out, and there's no earthly use in arguing the point. Dick treats poor dear Bella like a husband now, and it's much too big; it's downright unfair on a girl, Tommy, pulling his tow-coloured head close down to her 'tipe young' lips, 'I believe he loves somebody else.'"

"Tommy Godolphin, loyal to the backbone, grew red and stammered out something about treason."

Nelly's keen dark eyes were fixed upon his ingenuous countenance, which made it blazon into a still deeper tint. "Now, Tommy," she said, decidedly, "you know it, and you will just be good enough to tell me all about it. Who is she, and what is she?"

"Hanged if I know I!" restlessly.

Nelly promptly jumped up, pushed him back into his place, and plumped her small person upon his knee as a retainer.

"None of that," she said, sternly; "here you are, and here you stay until you answer my question. Who is she, and what is she?"

Tommy Godolphin was in a fix and looked round as if expecting help from somewhere. But none promised itself. Their little life was likely to be interrupted for another hour.

"Tommy!"

"Nelly!"

"Who is she, and what is she?"

He was following with profound attention the nimble gyrations of some flies who were circling above their heads, but Nelly waited.

"What rum little animals they are," he said, with a despairing almost tragic sigh.

"I don't see anything rum about them," and Nelly looked at him stonily.

"I say, Nelly, hang it all! I can't peach, you know."

"Tommy! as if it would be peaching to tell me! Isn't it in our compact that we tell each other everything?"

"Yes," ruefully, "but this ain't our own business."

"Behave!" with lesser rein on honour. "It is my business to find out how the land lies, what the hitch is, not, Tommy, to tell Bella and create mischief. I am with you there, Tom; it—but—saxing—'I want to be prepared to help poor Bella when the pinch comes, as, mark me, comes it must sooner or later.'"

"Yes," with unmistakable relief; "there's bound to be an explosion."

"Easily—and now, Tommy, who is she, and what is she?"

In matters of this sort Nelly Fargson invariably found it the safest policy to work directly back to her first starting point.

"Well," desperately, "you'll keep teased, you know, that's in our bargain. She's a fisher-girl, and her name's Patience Merrick."

"A fisher maid!" said Nelly, genuinely surprised, "and Dick is the very essence of fastidiousness?"

"My powers, Nelly, this girl's a beauty of the first water. She's like nothing I've ever seen, and she's descended straight away from the old Vikings, don't you know, and may have royal blood in her veins for aught I know. She looks it, anyhow."

"And is he going to marry her, Tommy?"

Tommy stirred uneasily upon the velvet covered settee, and his fair tormentor did not press the question. Instead she blushed, rosy, and turned herself about on his knee so that she immediately faced him.

"Tommy, was he in Paris with her?"

"Yes," blushing it out, "he was, and all Paris raved about her, so that he had to hook it!"

"And he was not with you at the Lakes?"

"Lord, no!"

"Nor on the Northumberland coast, nor at the Farnes?"

"Yes, we shot some of those tough little sea-birds together."

"Ah! and he stayed at Tynemouth, did you say, and you came home?"

Tommy had said nothing about Tynemouth, but remembered that Nelly knew the coast, and nodded.

"He saw her, you know."

"And last week it was not you who recalled him to town in such whirly?"

"Yes and no. I sent the telegram. I did, upon my honour," considering when his torture was to end.

"Of course you did, goosey," kissing him between the honest twinkling eyes. "You did everything for your friend, as I must do for mine when the time comes; but, eh, Tommy, fairly breaking down, 'I am so sorry for her, for she loves him.'"

"That's what bothers me," admitted her lover, as he fell to at his office of consoler. "It's a beastly shame, and we've nearly come to hammer and song over it, as 'tis."

Presently Nelly dried up her tears, or perhaps I should rather say controlled her emotion sufficiently to say,—

"Well?"

He was too dense to see in a moment what was required of him—further information; and, as a matter of fact, he had already told literally all he knew.

"Where is she now?" asked Nelly, quickly enlightening him.

"That I don't know any more than Adam."

She saw quite plainly that this was truth.

"You see, Nell, we had some words and I made a point of not knowing."

"Hum!" said Nelly, "perhaps you were right, but I am not quite sure. I must think it out. I fancy he is going away again to-morrow."

Tommy nodded, but out came the truth that this and his point blank refusal to act as

medium was the cause of the slight coolness which was existent.

"I thought," said Nelly, "this morning that he was in a bad humour; this accounts for it; but, Tommy, you are quite right in standing aloof."

Meanwhile, in the small riverside house at New, the ex-fisher-maid was still abjectly content with her lot in life except for one thing—that she did not hear from her own people.

This she could not understand; it was unlike them, and then doubts of her own conduct rushed in upon her like a flood.

Hitherto she had been living in a seething haze of new sensations. Her swift rush of events had tended to blind her of home recollections; not that these were all at once, or that she was overmuch anxious to hear her old life in view. The present was much more alluring.

But she cared for her own people and resented that they should thus humiliate her. She wanted them to see all she had gained, and then they would know she could not have acted other than she did.

They had no right to censure and control her with their narrow notions, for she had low selfishness and novel breeding taught her to reason.

The freedom she demanded even in the old life had always been a bone of contention, but she closely related to her—put it down to her apathy from their in the matter of education, for she had gone to a town school every now and again, and was supposed to be somewhat different to them.

And then her beauty blinded them to her weakness, and the simple, trusting folk had shut their eyes to imperil.

Not until their sister was gone did those sturdy fisher-lads realize what they had let happen at their very door.

The weather-bent old father simply gave up caring to live, and so died, and was quietly buried, and the young men were left alone to face the curious looks and the suspicion of shame with what hardihood they may. Now hardihood was bred into their very marrow, they could face the storm and battle with the sea at its most deadly peril.

But this shore trouble—this creeping horror of shame—bore them down so that they feared the very sight of a neighbour's face. Not that the neighbours were other than kind, but the kindness was not a silent kindness, but one which advanced itself in outspoken sympathy in loud voiced condemnation of the wanton who had flung away his hold to their simple test.

Even in the fishers' chapel the prayers tended that way, so that to the young men's ears it sounded out of the heated conventicle.

A meeting was convened to argue his case out of him and Jim faced round upon his tormentors, looking at them as he held ill for the power of ghastly interference.

"How do any of you know," he asked, "what her disposition was? What her present life is? Answer me that, and if she should come back to our midst on any day she may as an honest woman, what will you say then, lads? When should you will be out turn. Come on, Tom! to his brother, 'let's get out of this and we'll come back again when 'tis a fairer fight.'"

There was a revulsion of feeling and murmurings of easily aroused partisanship stirred the closely-packed meeting.

Primarily hands were laid upon Jim Merrick's sinewy arms, but he flung them off with a powerful oath, and almost electrified his fellow fishers and their women with the impetus with which he rushed his quieter tempered kinsman through their midst and into the open air.

The night was hot and sultry, and he panted for breath, as together they strode to the far cliffs. Instantly prompted them thither where the sea would be more friendly than these human inquirers.



He lay prone on the bare rock, at a high point above the sea level, and putting his handsome clear-cut face between his stalwart hands—for they were nothing less—he gazed desperately out to sea.

Tom Merrick—his blood but a little cooler for the whole thing runned to boiling point of retaliation—tramped backwards and forwards on the ledge of rock which skirted the green sward above their heads.

It was a dizzy height they had chosen; or would have been to men with less nerve to face danger.

Tom would like now to talk, but Jim, who had given vent to speech, was run out, and lapsed moody.

He still lay on the ground stung, and immovable as the rocks that held him. A few drops of rain fell, and suddenly a blurred mist settled upon the stretch of channel below them, and a few sea birds uttered shrill warning cries. Still no movement in the recumbent figure, and the other brother waited with a solid patience.

Presently the whole of the coast-line was wrapped in fog—dense and blinding. No one but men accustomed to such blackness would have dared to move lest they should totter and fall over some awkward point; but Jim Merrick sprang up.

"Tom," he called—four voices penetrate the mist with the greatest ease—"are you with me, or against me? I am going to throw up this, now the old man's gone, and go to Farness where they chaps hailed from as I took to the Farnes. He little knew I was Merrick; but as there is a God above us I find him and the shall run the day he worked a Merrick all. I don't want you to leave Tyne, lad, and go with them. You've ties here as I haven't; and she's a good lass, and true. Take to the gear and the old house, it'll be a home yet for her maybe. I only want to know are you with me or against me in what I'm going to do?"

In the soaking mist they clasped hands and only Tom Merrick found his way back to Cullercoats and Tyne-mouth.

He never met on that he knew ought of Jim's whereabouts, except to his wife Bess, who was a woman in a thousand. She never, by more than a look, asked him a question, knowing that questions which cannot be answered are best unasked. All she said was, and that only once, "When you're willing to him, Tom, say as how he's bringing patience to me—if she'll come."

## CHAPTER VII.

Once more Mrs. Robert Herringly professed herself to her husband and daughter dissatisfied; "and small wonder," thought Nelly Forgan, knowing all she knew. Richard had been away for more than a week, ostensibly having a run with an old college chum; but Mrs. Robert deemed it impolite of him to absent himself whilst they were visiting in his father's house.

Mr. Forgan would not contest the point with her, for he liked her even less than usual, and felt quite angry that in this case he was bound to inwardly acknowledge the justice of her case.

To his old friend he talked it over at some length, and they both came to the conclusion that the sooner the young fellow was married the better.

Gratified to her hostess's regret and discomfiture, Mrs. Robert decided to go on to Scarborough without waiting for Richard to accompany them, as she said they could well leave him out of their plans.

"Do you know, Bella," said Nelly, in girlish confidence, "I really think your mother is very wise? It will let Master Dick see he is not to play fast and loose at his pleasure, and he does certainly need a little bringing to book."

Bella blushed but could not deny the statement. "And I am so glad," went on Nelly, "that,

she has settled to go to Scarborough, because it was imperative for us to be there for the cricket week. You see, Tommy plays every day."

"And so does Dick for that matter," said Bella, "and he knows his own business best in taking this time before going so far North." Her colour deepened as she continued. "I do not say that mamma is not right, but Richard and I thoroughly understand each other, which, I must confess, is more than mamma and I do."

"Then there's nothing more to be said?" observed Nelly, eagerly, hoping against hope that, after all, Tommy had a wee bit—quite innocently, of course—exaggerated.

Mamma had so much to do, and, perhaps, after all, these two had met quite promisingly in Paris.

She looked at Bella in unmitigated surprise. How differently she would have felt and demeaned herself under similar circumstances; but then she was not so amiable as Bella, nor so sensible. To be sure, Tommy never treated her so cavalierly.

"Poor dear, he couldn't," she told herself. "Not yet, at all events."

That gentleman was occupied every spare moment getting his paraphernalia in order for the cricket week at Scarborough, and thought as little as he possibly could of Dick's defection and their own slight coolness.

He had an easy-going philosophy in things blowing over or drying straight which, to a certain extent, was showed by Nelly, although she, being of a more inquisitive turn and plagued or blessed with a "managing" capacity, could not do other than burden her mind with untoward possibilities.

She knew she should find it extremely difficult to be commonly civil to Dick when he appeared upon the scene, and she had a very good mind to tax him with his conduct, but Tommy prayed her not to meddle in the matter on any account.

"It can do no possible good," she maintained, desperately alarmed, "and may do incalculable mischief."

So Nelly gave her solemn word of honour not to breathe a single word of her knowledge of his delinquencies.

"But," she said, "you don't know how hard it will be, Tommy."

"There may be just nothing in it," she pleaded, "except one of his ordinary flirtations. I don't suppose there is by this time." Nelly looked dubious, but set her lover's mind at rest that nothing should induce her to say one single word without first consulting with him upon the subject.

"But mind, Tommy, if you get to know that it is going on still, you are to keep your promise and tell me."

"I suppose," ran her thoughts, when she was left alone, "he will be tired of her by now, and then Bella and he will be very happy, as married happiness goes. Of course, with Tommy and me it's—so different. I expect we shall always be a bit silly."

Could she have seen the inside of a pretty artistic room at Kew her ruminations may have undergone a good many degrees of enlightenment.

Patience was looking lovelier than ever, clad in a tea-gown of biscuit-coloured cashmere, with front composed of white satin and gold passementerie. These garments, with their semi-looseness of fit, became her far better than severe tailor gowns or close-fitting dress-maker's fashions, because she rebelled at corsets. To comfort her exacting lover, husband she laughingly professed herself getting used to them by degrees.

"You see I could not have rowed you up to Richmond this morning had I been strapped so," with a rippling laugh of pure enjoyment. "And when am I going on a journey with you, dear, or do the firm object to wives following the fortunes of their lords when on what you call commission trips? But," as if on a sudden thought, "is commercial travelling a low occupation, Roland?"

Seeing his face, she amended her unfortunate remark by adding,—

"I only ask, dear, because in —," naming a novel in which she had been interested during his last "journey." "It is allured upon as if it were, and somehow," leisurely savoring her dainty surroundings, "it gave me the impression that commercial gentlemen were needy, and what's the word—impe—impe—something, anyhow it means the same—needy, poor, you know."

"You must be very fortunate, dear, to care enough to give me all these delightful things. Why, this sash alone I have on cost five guineas and I wanted to ask you whether I shall show them or not, for they so soon get soiled with these sweeping trains. I don't want to be an extravagant wife, you know."

He was annoyed; somehow wisely domesticity on her part always annoyed him unreasonably, and this made her waver, but did not in any other way disturb her certainty. She was not a woman easily cowed.

"No matter," she laughed, in that lively disdainful cadence which vaguely irritated him because it made him feel small, "I don't want to give them up; one always likes to look new, and if you don't mind the expense, I don't. The only thing is, with just the least little sigh, 'there are so few to see me, although I dress carefully every day.'"

"Oh! what do you think? A tolerably good, such a queer little stuck-up man, called upon me the day before yesterday, and was so inquisitive about us, I thought, and so I quickly hint him up. What did it concern him, Roland, where and when we were married, that you had no relations at all, and that mine were fisher-folk."

"I should say," hotly, "they were as good as his any day in the week, for he didn't look as if he could have crushed a beetle."

She said beadle, in which her husband regained his good humour after his amused exclamation.

"Ah!" she said, taking it in good part, "I see the difference; but I'm not so sure but what a beetle would crush him. You should just see him, Roland. But Roland," quise anxiously, "ladies' real duties do wear them—these tea-gowns, don't they?"

"Of course they do; what are you driving at now?"

"I don't know," pucker up her white forehead, "that nasty little man made me feel horrid. He put me in mind of that other little black-coated pigmy who married me. Don't you remember how disappointed I was? I thought all Scotchmen must be fine-looking and stalwart, like our race, you see. And that reminds me that he said he quite thought he knew you or had met you somewhere—little fool; as if he could not have recollected your name if he had."

Roland Harper started. What if this man did know him as Richard Herringly?

Too late, he wished he had not taken the small house at Kew, and so settled down in one spot. It might have been safer had he set up a roving establishment.

But Patience had stipulated for a home, and had especially desired to be near water of some sort, and he could deny her nothing.

(To be concluded in our next.)

It is an undeniable fact that left-handed persons, or rather those who have trained the left hand instead of the right, from infancy, are much better performers on the piano than right-handed persons. One of the greatest difficulties to be overcome by piano players in the rendering of classical music is the accurate execution of the bass; and musicians give two reasons for it: one that the left hand is weak from inactivity, and the other, that it has lacked, or does lack, the education which the right hand has received.

## A THANKLESS SON.

"Yes," said Uncle Sam, rubbing the palms of his hands together, "I really think it will be a match; and I'm very glad of it. A nice, straight, cherry-cheeked girl, with eyes as black as jet—a girl that has a fair notion of a batch of bread, and can make a pudding with anybody. I couldn't wish Jack a better wife."

"Some folks has all the luck," said Farmer Jones, whose son was married to a pretty slattern, who read novels all day, and had no more idea of housekeeping than the kittens that friked on the hearth.

"It ain't luck," said Uncle Sam, "it's nouse—that's what it is."

And his wrinkled visage beamed with satisfaction as he stood there under the great feathery elm that shadowed the farmyard gate, thinking what a model wife Mildred Steele would make for his only son.

It had been the pride of Samuel Blythe's life to make his farm the model farm of the neighbourhood; and when his son came of age he formally made it over to him.

"It's for Jack's sake I've been making it what it is," said he. "Let him go on with it now."

"But, father—"

Samuel Blythe laid his hand softly on Jack's shoulder.

"My boy," said he, in a voice that faltered a little, "what object in life have I beyond your happiness? Bring home a nice, stirring little wife; carry on the farm as I have begun it, and I shall be happy."

"You are the best father in the world!" cried the young man, fervently.

Farmer Jones trudged home with a setting of black Spanish eggs in a hand-basket, and Samuel Blythe strolled leisurely along the lane, his hands behind his back, his eyes bent meditatively on the fresh grass, when suddenly the sound of voices behind the vine-draped stone wall at the left reached his ear—Jack's voice, and that of Annie Moore, the pretty little distant cousin who did the housework and kept the family stockings darned.

"Don't, Jack!" said Annie. "There—you've spilt all my blackberries!"

"Oh, bother the blackberries!" interjected Jack; "I can easily get some more. Here, Annie, let me carry the basket?"

"But—your father wouldn't like it."

"Give it to me! I will have it! Why shouldn't he like it, puss?"

"Because—you know, Jack—Millie."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Jack, cavalierly. "As if Millie Steele were half as pretty as you! That's right—don't shrink away so. Aren't we cousins?"

And the cheery young voices died away among the bushes.

Uncle Sam stood quite motionless, his hands still clasped behind his back, his eyes still rooted on the grass, but the expression of his countenance had altered altogether.

"It won't do," he muttered to himself. "It will never do in the world. This little blue-eyed mite of a thing is going to spoil all my plans. At this rate I must send her to Cousin Martha Bowden's."

And the very next day Annie Moore was ruthlessly given notice to quit.

"Have I done anything wrong, Uncle Sam?" questioned Annie, looking wistfully up into her relative's face.

"No, my dear, no," said Uncle Sam, twisting himself about rather guiltily. "But old Mrs. Bowden has the rheumatism badly, and perhaps you can be made useful there. Jack will soon be married you know, and—"

Annie's lips quivered; the tears sparkled into her eyes.

"Oh, Uncle Sam, are they really engaged?"

"Well, no, not quite. But the next thing to it," said Uncle Sam. "It's an understood thing between 'em."

Now this was trenching on the absolute

truth of the question, but Uncle Sam had an idea that it would not do to mince matters just at present.

The girl's sweet, flower-like face fell instantaneously.

"I—I will go to Cousin Martha's," she said, in a low voice. "I'm only sorry I hadn't known before!"

And Uncle Sam felt particularly guilty as he kissed her and wished her good-bye.

All this business was diplomatically transacted in Jack Blyth's absence, and when he came home from town with a pretty little churn which he had somewhere picked up for Annie, the girl was gone.

"Where's Annie?" demanded the young farmer, looking around in bewilderment.

"Gone to stay a spell at Cousin Martha Bowden's," said Uncle Sam, glibly. "They needed her there, and so she's gone."

"And left no word for me?"

"No," said Uncle Sam. But he knew that the monosyllable cut Jack to the heart.

They were married, of course. Pretty Mildred Steele was exactly the girl to comprehend the situation, and make the most of her advantages. And Jack, in his desponding mood, succumbed to fate, and "supposed it might as well be Millie as any one else."

"Talk about circumstances," said Uncle Sam. "Any man can mould circumstances to suit himself, if only he has a little tact."

And he rubbed his hands more gleefully than ever.

But as the days rolled by Uncle Sam began to doubt the efficacy of his charm.

"I really think, Father Blythe," said the bride, with a boss of the head encircled by the black, shining braids, "that you're making an unnecessary fuss over that toothache of yours."

"An—unnecessary fuss!" repeated Uncle Sam, in dismay.

"Old folks hadn't ought to be so fretful and exacting," went on Millie. "It isn't Christian; and I, for one, won't bear it. If you can't sit quiet and peaceable by the fire, I think you had better stay in your own room."

And Mrs. Mildred flounced into the kitchen to turn the batch of cake in the oven before it should burn.

Samuel Blythe rose slowly and went up to his room. If he had been a familiar student of Shakespeare, he might have quoted to himself the old passage, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!" But he was not a literary man, and kept his thoughts and troubles in his own bosom.

"Jack doesn't feel so," he told himself. "Jack has a little compassion on his old father yet."

But that very evening, when he came groping down into the kitchen to get some mustard for his aching face, he heard Mildred conferring with her husband in the adjoining sitting-room.

"It's no use talking," said Mrs. Blythe, junior, in an excited sort of way, "and I shan't stand it any longer, that's positive. There's a very good vacancy in the Home at Oldhampton, and it's the only place he's fit for."

"Perhaps you are right, my dear," said Jack, ruefully. For, big six footer though he was, he stood in mortal fear of his slim, black-eyed wife. "I dare say they'll make him very comfortable there, and I wouldn't mind paying a good weekly sum to secure peace at home."

Samuel Blythe did not stop to find the mustard tin. He crept slowly back up to his own room and sat down on the side of the bed. The Oldhampton Home! A sort of a living tomb in which he was to be interred at Millie's capricious will, with his one afternoon out in the week, his daily allowance of tobacco, and his clean desolate cell.

He shuddered at the bare idea. But what was he to do? He remembered, with a shudder, that he had made over all his property to

Jack and his wife—that he had actually not one cent to call his own! And *this* was the return measure dealt out to him.

"Little Annie wouldn't have treated me so," said he, with one of the salt, stinging tears of old age burning its way down his cheek. "Little Annie would have been good to the old man."

Out into the night—the cold, sparkling, starry night—he made his way, with the vague, half-formed idea of going to Annie.

Martha Bowden lived twenty miles away, it is true, but he had walked twenty miles before, and he could again. Anything to get away from Millie's hard, sharp eyes, and put a distance between him and the Home, Oldhampton.

"Oh, Martha, look here! An old man, asleep by the roadside. Or, is he asleep? Come, Martha, quick! It's Uncle Sam—dear, good old Uncle Sam!"

Annie had run out in the dewy calm of the early morning to get a few of the water-cresses that old Mrs. Bowden liked for her breakfast; and to her surprise she found a prostrate figure stretched out beside the brook, where Samuel Blythe had tried to drink, and fallen unconscious in the attempt.

"So it is," said Martha. "Whatever can have brought him here?"

And between them they lifted him up and carried him tenderly into the house.

"Will you keep me, Annie?" Samuel Blythe faltered, when sense and reason returned once more to his beclouded brain. "Will you give me a crust, and shelter, and keep me out of the Home, Oldhampton?"

"Dear Uncle Sam," said Annie, bursting into tears, "you were good to me once, and all that I have is yours, and welcome! And, oh! Uncle Sam, I shall be proud to have you come and live with me. And I'm married to Cousin Martha's son now, and we are so happy. Aren't we, Arthur, dear?"

Samuel Blythe looked sadly into her bright eyes. If she had married his boy, how different things would have been. If he could only have been content to let Fate alone, how much wisdom he would have shown! But he had managed affairs to suit himself, and this was the way he was suited.

Mildred Blythe tossed her head again when she heard where her father-in-law had taken refuge.

"I'm satisfied, if it suits him," said she. "All I know is that I shouldn't have tolerated him around the place much more."

Jack came to see his father, however, at the old Bowden farm-house, where Annie, a blooming young matron, held out her hand to welcome him, without a vestige of the constraint that was so visible in his face and manner.

"Father," said he, "I'm sorry you and Millie don't get on together."

"It's the old story, my boy," said Uncle Sam. "The young birds crowd the old ones out of the nest. But I never could have stayed there to be sent to the Home, Oldhampton."

Jack coloured scarlet under the contemptuous lightning of Annie's eyes, and got away as best he could.

"There he goes," said Samuel Blythe, with a sigh; "and I have lost my boy for ever!"

But it was all his own fault, and he knew it.

No two sides of the human face are exactly alike. In at least nineteen cases out of twenty the left side of the face is the most characteristic, and, therefore, the strongest likeness; but often the right side is the most comely. Of course this characteristic is more sharply defined in some faces than in others. We all smile on the left side of our face. Our facial muscles move, as it were, with more ease and facility on the left side.



## OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH.

—o—

BUSINESS trip had called me to West Cornwall, much against my will, late in December. With all speed I had performed my duty, and was congratulating myself that I might yet be able to spend the holidays at my own fireside, when the very night fixed for my departure one of the most terrific storms that had visited the country for years swept that coast, and all travel was precluded for the time.

Thoroughly disgusted, I yet had one thing to be thankful for, and that was that my host at Hayle, and his house were both pleasant and hospitable.

For two days the gale lasted, lashing the ocean, which curbed its proud waves at the very door, into a foam and passion, the like of which I had never witnessed.

On the evening of the third day, as I stood at one of the upper windows, gazing out on the wild expanse of mad waters Mr Tregellis who was beside me, said:

"Do you see that long point of land to the north that stretches into the sea? That was very nearly my grave once, twenty years ago, in just such another storm as this."

I looked in the direction indicated, and perceived dimly through the snow scud and low-lying clouds a rocky point reaching out into the ocean.

"Shipwrecked?" I inquired, for I knew my friend had been a sailor.

He shook his head.

"How, then?" I continued, somewhat interested. "Surely you were not there for pleasure in such weather?"

"No, it was business which took me there, and stern necessity which kept me. But if you care to hear the story I will tell it to you this evening."

All day the war of the elements continued, and after dinner we sat with cigar and pipe about the broad hearthstone before the glowing fire, and listened to the shriek of the storm flende without, I called upon my companion for his promised story.

"You doubtless remember," said he, "for you have known me a full quarter of a century that during all that time I have been, in one way and another, in this place."

"Well, about '67 or '68, I was acting as special agent of customs, part of my duties being—and I may say the main part—to prevent, or at least to diminish, if possible, the smuggling along this coast."

"At that time the principal illegal entries were made by traders from France who imported brandies, laces, and other valuable goods, hid them along this unfrequented coast, and then later transported them inland, as opportunity served."

"After studying the matter for a few months, I became convinced that the only method by which I could hope to discover the plans, landing places and habits of the smugglers would be to join them."

"So it was given out that I was called away, and I shaved my beard, dyed my face hands and hair, clothed myself in sailor dress, and a few days later dropped in at a tavern in St. Ives, a tar out of work."

"Within a week I had found a chance to ship under one of the very men I suspected, and, after a proper reluctance, signed the papers."

"Nominally I was bound for the West Indies, but actually, as one of my shipmates told me, for no further a port than Bordeaux."

"Two days later we sailed, and in due course found ourselves on the coast of France, our captain having stated to us at the last moment a change of plans, and shortly thereafter we lay at a wharf in Bordeaux."

"I knew enough French to roam about town, and took occasion to write a letter to my superior, giving him a full account of my adventures, of our ship and crew, not omitting the cargo, which I knew was to be brandy,

and advising him about when to look for me at home."

"Foolishly I posted this letter in a box near the wharf, and evidently I was seen to do so by one of the ship's officers as after events proved."

"Our return passage was not as pleasant as the outgoing one, for it was late in October, and the winter came early that year. Off the Lands End we had bad weather and plenty of it, and my duties were severe; but I had shipped for the voyage, and was bound to see it through, so I could only grin and bear it."

"We were nominally bound for Ireland, but after rounding the cape we ran in close to shoal."

"It was not a nice place to lay at anchor, and we were all surprised that the captain should choose it. But I had not much time to wonder, for hardly had the chains ceased to rattle in the hawse holes when with two others I was called aft to man a boat and row that officer ashore."

"Now," thought I, "comes the revelation! Shortly I shall know the hiding-place of these rascals!"

"With alacrity I therefore obeyed the summons, and through a heavy sea we rowed in, touching the beach at a little cove just on the other side of the point to which I called your attention this morning, where we landed and drew the boat up on the sand."

"Somewhat to my surprise, the captain called upon me to follow him, directing the others to come as well."

"We advanced to the centre of the woods which clothe the point, when he stopped, and turning to me, said,

"Dickson,"—for that was the name under which I had shipped—"you are a cursed spy. I have here your letter written at Bordeaux to the customs officers, which, if received by them, would have sent me and my crew to prison. But I have caught the letter and you too. Do you know what I am going to do with you?"

"You may perhaps imagine my feelings. Alone with three deadly enemies on a waste point of land surrounded by ocean. It was terrible!"

"After a moment I replied,—

"I don't know what your plans are, but I do know that if I am not returned alive and well at Hayle, the government will call you to account."

"He laughed long and loud."

"And are sailors never lost at sea—never drowned? You shall be reported drowned, and in order that the report shall be true I intend to drown you! Seize him, men, and bind him!"

"All three threw themselves upon me instantly, and though I fought with the desperation of a doomed man, I was soon overpowered and wound from head to heels with ropes supplied by the captain from the boat on the shore."

"Out a stake!" he ordered.

And the men cut a heavy stake, some eight or ten feet long, and sharpened one end.

"Now pick up that carcass and follow me!"

"Again they obeyed him, and in five minutes we were on the weather side of the point, facing a strong wind, which drove the spray from the rising sea into our face."

"The chill of winter was in the air, and as the water fell upon the stones of the beach it congealed."

"I remember noticing all this, and thinking that if I was left tied to the stake, I should freeze before I drowned."

"Wade out there into the surf, you fellows," commanded the captain, "and drive that stake down firm and strong!"

"The tide was falling. When the stake was set, the men carried me out and lashed me to it. The water came about to my knees, but would recede further still before it rose again."

"You can go now," said the captain to his men. "Come back for me after the next

tide. I'll wait here," and he smiled diabolically.

"The others disappeared, and I was left alone with my murderer."

"How he gloated over me, now cursing, and now deriding me! How he scoffed at the government and all its agents! and with what devilish glee he counted the hours I might still live! I shall never forget it."

"It was almost sundown now, and the wind had risen to a furious gale."

"The snow flew sharp and chill through the air, the roar of the sea filled my ears, and the tide—which had turned—began to seethe and hiss nearer to me, while the driving storm dashed the spray in bucketful over us."

"My tormentor sat upon a great rock a dozen feet from me, and although the surf wet him as it did me, and the icy blasts blew about him, yet he did not seem to notice it, so hot was his rage and desire to see me die."

"At length, however, the water was boiling about my knees and up to his very feet, when he reluctantly arose to retreat a little inshore. As he did so, he turned to fling another curse in my face."

"That effort cost him his life. At the very instant when his attention was turned to me, a sweep of wind more powerful than any before struck him. He staggered, his feet slipped on the wet and icy stones, and losing his balance he fell."

"There was a sound like the cracking of wood, a fierce savage cry of pain, a straggle to rise, resulting only in groans and curses, and the villain sank at full length upon the wet stones and sand of the beach, helpless. His thigh was broken!"

"And I saw him die. With shrieks and curses mingled with prayers, with supplications to me and to his Maker, he filled the moments left to him, until the heartless sea, rising to my waist swept over his head, and with a last horrible, bubbling cry, the tragedy had ended."

"Unable to move, a victim myself, I had endured the sight of a wicked, crime-stained life blotted out at my very feet! Why my brain did not burst I cannot tell you."

"And I was saved. Yes, the heavy surf beating upon me loosened the stake, and before the water had reached my neck I was rolled and tumbled upon the beach, half released from my bonds by the same cruel sea which had threatened to drown me."

"A few struggles and I was free. You may be sure I did not remain long in that place. A tramp of an hour brought me to open country where I could see lights, and two hours later I was under a doctor's care here in Hayle."

"For weeks my life was despaired of, but I eventually recovered, although those hours in the surfaged me years."

"The body of the captain was not taken away by the boat's crew, if, indeed, they ever returned. It was afterwards found by others and given decent burial, but the ship was never heard from again."

"Whether frightened to some other coast, or leaving the country altogether, the smugglers sought to escape punishment for their crimes, or whether lost at sea, will for ever remain a mystery, but such storms as this always bring me in vivid remembrance of my terrible experiences on Dead Man's Point, twenty years ago."

Among the Apache Indians they have very curious notions regarding mothers-in-law. A traveller in an Apache village was very much surprised to see an old woman and a young man, who had suddenly come together face to face, turn about quickly and run in opposite directions. This little excitement was caused by the fact that it is considered very wrong for a brave to look at his mother-in-law's face, and still more so to speak to her.

## FACETIÆ.

THE best throw with dice—Throw them away.

The first impulse of a boy with a new watch is to assure himself that none of its 175 parts are missing.

Good advice is worth more than money, but Jones says that somehow he cannot make his creditors see it in that light.

An Irish reporter lately described "some heavy drops of rain as varying in size "from a shilling to eighteenpence."

"What were you thrashing your boy for last night?" asked a neighbour of Mr. Caution. "Wild oats," was the old man's reply.

To fall off the chair and rouse yourself by knocking your head against a corner of andirons is what some people call "just clearing the eyes."

BREAKS HIS WORD.—"I never could trust him—he breaks his word every time he opens his mouth." "He does?" "Yes—he stutters."

"That boy of ours is getting to be a terrible story-teller," said Mr. Oberitry. "Yes," said his wife, "he tells fibs on the slightest provocation."

"Doctor," said a lady who wanted a little advice gratis, "what do you do when you catch cold?" "I cough, madam," was his polite reply.

A CALIFORNIA newspaper is said to have been sued for libel by a widow for speaking of her deceased husband as having "gone to a happier home."

It is not good for man to be alone, except when his wife's millinery bills come in. Then it is a good thing for the whole family that he should be alone.

First tailor: "Do you bow to your customers when you meet them in the streets?" Second ditto: "Well, as a rule I do, but I always omit my mistakes."

A LITTLE boy, six years old, was sent to school last week for the first time, and on his return home asked his papa, "Who taught the first man his letters?"

HUSBAND: "I'm going into business in Wall-street, and don't know whether to be a bull or a bear." Wife: "Don't worry, dear, you will always be a beast of some kind."

"I beg your pardon, madam, but you are sitting on my hat," exclaimed a gentleman. "Oh, pray excuse me; I thought it was my husband's," was the unexpected reply.

A GUEST at a country inn exclaimed: "I say, landlord, your food is worse than it was last year." "Impossible, sir," was the rather ambiguous reply of the landlord.

Mrs. POKINAY: "What does your husband think of your new hat?" Mrs. BISHOP: "He hasn't looked at it yet. The bill has attracted his entire attention for the past two days."

An unreasonable lover: "I could sit here by the hour to hear what the wild waves are saying." "Miranda, it would be confoundingly more encouraging to me if you listened to what I'm saying."

SPRING POET (handing a roll of paper to the editor): "There, sir, I think there's some stuff in that poem." Editor (glancing at it): "There is, indeed, my boy. It's all stuff. Good morning."

Mr. HOBBS: "I see that a Newport, Pa., farmer has a hairless calf on exhibition." "What a remarkable freak that is!" "Mrs. Hobbs: "Remarkable! Why you rebald-headed yourself, John."

A DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT.—Miss Antique (school teacher): "What does white spell?" "Cless—no answer." Miss Antique: "What is the colour of my skin?" "Cless (in chorus): "Yellow."

WOMEN of letters are quite partial to T gowns.

On Sunday morning: Miss Travis: "Ah, Johnny, I've caught you with a fishpole over your shoulder. I shall go and tell your father. Where is he?" Johnny: "Down at the foot of the garden, diggin' the bait."

"I HAVE met this man," said a lawyer, with extreme severity, "in a great many places where I would be ashamed to be seen myself." And then he paused and looked with astonishment at the smiling court and jury.

FATHER: "You girls should fix your minds on something higher than dress." One of the girls: "That is what we have, pa. We have got our minds fixed on a couple of lovely high hats down at Mrs. Feather's millinery rooms."

BESSIE: "Ma and pa have been quarrelling, haven't they?" Willie: "Yep." Bessie: "Which one got the worst of it—do you know?" Willie: "Not yet. I'm waiting to see which one of them slams the door going out."

THE best of reasons: Balfrey: "What's the matter, Leah boy? Why don't you sit down?" Cawley: "Cawn't, you know. Got on a standing collar."

POLICE JUDGE: "Did you see the beginning of this trouble?" Witness: "Yes, sir; I saw the very commencement. It was about two years ago. 'Two years ago?' "Yes, sir. The minister said, 'Will you take this man to be your lawful husband?' and she said, 'I will.'"

FIRST DOCTOR: "You have been spreading the report that I have poisoned several people in this town. I want you to take it back." Second Doctor: "Certainly, I don't hesitate to say that there are several people in this town whom you have not yet poisoned. Hope you are satisfied now."

HIS FIRST.—Bjenkins: "By the way, Bjones, how old is that baby of yours?" Bjones (promptly): "One year, two months, and eight days."—His sixth. Bjenkins: "By the way, Bjones, how old is that youngest baby of yours now?" "Oh, hanged if I know! A year or so. Ask my wife."

"WHAT a seeming trifle may save a man's life, Browney! I read here that a half-crown in a man's waistcoat pocket turned the bullet aside!" "Such a trifle would never save my life, Darringer." "Why wouldn't it?" "Because you might perforate me with bullets and you'd never strike a half-crown."

"W-W-WILL you b-b-b-e m-m-mine, Miss Laura? C-c-c-an't you trust me through a life, my angel?" asked the stuttering young man. "I am afraid not, Mr. Jenkyns," replied the object of his devotion. "I am a little afraid to trust you. You have broken your word a half-dozen times in the last two minutes."

"Now, Miss Brown," said an earnest listener, "won't you play something for us?" "No, thank you," said the lady; "I'd rather hear Mr. Jones." Earnest Listener: "So would I, but—Here he was stopped by the expression on the young lady's face; and he looked confused for half an hour after she had indignantly turned and left him."

At a recent inquiry into the sanity of a young man of large property, witnesses were being called to prove that he was unfit to manage his affairs. A curious slip was made by a schoolmaster when asked if he had formed any opinion as to the state of mind of the alleged lunatic. "Oh, yes," he replied; "I can certify he is an idiot. He was one of my favourite pupils."

SCENE: The gaming-table at Monte Carlo. Young English lady with her little sister and a gentleman, whose acquaintances they have lately made while travelling. Young Lady: "Now, I shall just try one five franc piece on the number of my age," putting one on number eighteen. Number twenty-seven wins. Little Sister: "Oh, Maud, what fun! Now, if you had put it on your right age, you would have won, wouldn't you?"

"Whom little boy is this, I wonder?" asked the old gent. "There's two ways you could find out," said the small boy. "How so, my son?" "You might guess, or you might inquire," replied the small boy.

Mr. FARGONE: "My dear friend, I am in despair. That girl's heart is as hard as steel. I can make no impression on it." Friend: "You don't go at it in the right way. Try diamonds. They are harder than steel."

Poor John—he was a kind and forbearing husband," sobbed John's widow, on her return from the funeral. "Yes," said a sympathizing neighbour; "but it is all for the best. You must try to comfort yourself, my dear, with the thought that your husband is at peace at last."

He had made the grand tour. She: "I hear that you went as far as Constantinople, Mr. Smythe. Then you must have seen the Dardanelles?" He: "H'm! Don't remember the name. But I saw the Willards at Trieste, and young Spocpendyke, who was travelling with them."

A famous resort. Romantic spinster (to crusty old bachelor): "Would you mind showing me the exact spot where the young lady threw herself into the sea, and was rescued by a gentleman who afterwards married her?" Old Bachelor (gruffly, and moving away): "No, I can't; and I can't swim either."

At a recent wedding the bride was requested to sign her name in the register. Excitement caused her fingers to tremble. "She took the pen, signed, and made an enormous ink-blot. 'Must I do it over again?' she blushing asked her husband. 'No; that will do. But—' "Oh, don't mind me; I will pay more attention next time!"

MUSICAL VISITOR: "What a handsome piano! Mrs. Tiptop: "Yes, I do not know of any single piece of furniture I have that I am more proud of than my piano. It was made to order at a cost of five thousand dollars. Musical Visitor: "Oh, I must—why it's locked." Mrs. Tiptop: "Yes; I lost the key some months ago, and have forgotten to get another."

LITTLE TOMMY, who has a bald uncle, was very much interested when his mother told him, the other day, that the hairs of his head were all numbered. "Is that so with everybody?" asked he. "Yes," said his mother. "That is what the Bible says." Tommy pondered for a minute in silence. "Well," said he, finally, "if the Bible says so it must be so; but I'll bet the angel who does the counting feels mighty glad when he comes to a man with a head like Uncle Jim's."

At last the "broad arrow" has been mistaken for a geological specimen. The event is reported by a tourist in Galway, where the Royal Irish Engineers had been making a survey. "Bringing me one of them with great dignity," he says, "the old man withdrew his hat, and, pointing to the broad arrow, asked, with impressive solemnity, 'D'ye mind that?' "I do," said I. "Thim prints? He said so. The same," said I. "Thim, sorr," said the old man, with added solemnity and dignity, "thim, sorr, wor the tread of the aigle before the Flood."

In the olden time a woman in the North of Scotland went to visit her husband; who was condemned to be hanged upon the following day. The doomed man began to give his last instructions to his wife preparatory to bidding her farewell, when all at once she broke in upon the conversation, and exclaimed: "By the bye, John, when will I plant the tatties this year?" The unfortunate man, as may be imagined, grew exceedingly indignant at the indifference of his wife, and exclaimed angrily: "What need I care when ye plant them? I'm not likely to need any o' them." "Heck!" replied the woman, turning to the warden with a wag of the head, "oor John's huffed because he's gawn to be hanged the morn', and marched out of the cell."



## SOCIETY.

The common slang word "mush," is from a beautiful pypy word, *mufada*, which means "to charm by the eyes."

Smoking is apt to encourage the growth of hair on ladies' faces where any tendency to this exists. Amongst habitual lady smokers in Germany and elsewhere it is noticeable how many possess moustaches, &c.

Comfort shoes are the latest fashion in America. They are intended for persons with weak ankles, and have a row of whalebones stitched in the lining, which extend from the sole to the top of the shoe.

The Queen's personal tastes and habits are simple to a degree—far more so than those of many wives of gentlemen who operate successfully on the Stock Exchange or make a fortune out of patent medicines; indeed, it is a standing joke at Windsor that Her Majesty has worn the same old "mushroom" straw hat for thirty years.

The Princess of Wales was a contributor to the bazaar held at York, the other day. She sent for the stall of the 10th Hussars—her son's regiment—some really charming little pieces of English porcelain, the sale of which, stamped as they were with the cachet of Royalty, helped not a little to swell the sum obtained.

Of the three young Princesses of Wales, by far the cleverest, and the one possessed of the largest amount of *esprit*, is Princess Victoria, who though only just twenty-one, is, and has long been, her mother's right hand, carries on half of her correspondence, and supplies by the quickest and surest tact her mother's want of hearing.

The toilet of the really elegant young American is not complete now without one rather heavy gold or silver bangle worn on the left arm, and usually concealed beneath the cuff, though occasionally an æsthetic apostle of the beautiful in machine gear may be seen with the bracelet gleaming in full view on his delicate, blue-veined wrist.

At weddings, crying has "gone out." The bridegroom must not utter to the altar, nor should the bride be "overcome with sensibility." Neither sign of agitation is now "good form." But the bride must not, on the other hand, romp up the aisle in the exultation of her heart. The correct pace is, perhaps, best described as resembling that of a policeman on his beat. It is slow and stately.

When Her Royal Highness Princess Louise, Countess of Fife, pays her first visit to her northern home, I believe she will pass to the threshold of Mar Lodge beneath an arch of words upheld by killed champions of her noble husband, who almost rivals his late father in his love of Highland ceremonies and traditional customs. The scene should be delightfully picturesque, judging by the memory of a picture of an incident of the kind painted a few years ago by, I think, Mr. Canon Woodville.

A *maison* dress-front is to be seen at a "West-end" shop. It is a cobweb worked on white tatin—a piece of tatin which would form the front of a petticoat. The great cobweb comes down right into the left-hand corner, and smaller cobwebs come half-way up the side, and half-way along the bottom. It is all worked, with wonderful skill, and artistic feeling, in mother-of-pearl, with a number of the most lovely dyes and dyes caught here and there all over the cobwebs; the stones out of which these creatures are made are so varied in colour and cutting that it is difficult to catalogue them.

You can tell pretty well how a girl feels towards you by the way she takes your arm, says a writer in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "If she doesn't care a cent, you know it by the indifference of her muscles. If she has a great confidence in you the pressure tells it, and friendship is as distinct from love in that mode of expression as in words or looks."

## STATISTICS.

Nearly thirty-seven million babies are born in this world every year.

Last year the number of visitors to Shakspeare's birthplace was sixteen thousand eight hundred, Americans constituting one-fourth of the number.

GREAT BRITAIN has now ten warships of three thousand tons and upward, with a minimum speed of nineteen knots per hour. The United States possesses eight; France five, Germany and Spain, three; Italy and Japan, two; Russia, one.

England owns over half of the entire ocean tonnage of the world. The exact figures are 51.4 per cent. The increase of the steam tonnage of the world in 1888 was 633,948 tons and half of this increase was built by British owners. In the same year the United States added to her tonnage only twenty-seven new steamers and 10,274 tons. Even Japan has gone beyond this figure, in the same period, by the addition of fifty steamers and 66,084 tons.

## GEMS.

Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy.

The superior man wishes to be slow in his words and earnest in his conduct.

Advice should be like a gentle fall of snow, and not like a driving storm of hail. It should descend softly, and not be uttered hastily.

MARRIAGE is tolerably certain to prove a failure when woman weddeth to gain a home, and man to secure an under-paid servant.

The richest genius, like the most fertile soil, when uncultivated shoots up into the rankest weeds; and instead of vines and olives for the pleasure and use of man, produces to its slothful owner the most abundant crop of poisons.

WHAT rapturous flights of sound! what thrilling, pathetic chirps! what wild, joyous revelry of passion! what an expression of agony and woe!—all the feelings of suffering and rejoicing humanity sympathized with and finding a voice in those tones.

Kind words produce their own image in men's souls, and a beautiful image it is. They soothe and quiet and comfort the hearer. They shame him out of his sour, morose unkind feelings. We have not yet begun to use kind words in such abundance as they ought to be used.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BAM should be broiled very quickly and just enough to cook through.

TIN cleaned with paper will shine better than when cleaned with flannel.

APPLE PUDDING.—Two cups of biscuit crumbs, six apples stewed and sweetened, two eggs, a small piece of butter, and a little grated nutmeg; mix all together, and bake one-half hour.

COCONUT PUDDING.—To one quart of boiling water add three tablespoonfuls of corn-flour one-quarter of a cup of butter; let cool, then stir in one grated coconut, five eggs, rind and juice of one lemon; sugar to taste. Set in a moderate oven to brown.

A good remedy for mildew stains, and the very best is as follows:—Mix equal quantities of soft soap and powdered starch with half the quantity of salt; make into a paste with lemon juice, lay this paste on each side of the mildew stains, and let the articles lie out on the grass day and night till the stains disappear.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

New York is talking of a World's Fair in 1892, to celebrate the discovery of America by Columbus.

The new enamel jewellery and ornaments are really charming, and flowers are so perfectly imitated that one could almost imagine they were really plucked.

There is that controlling worth in goodness that the will cannot but like and desire it; and, on the other side, that odious deformity in vice, that it never offers itself to the affections of mankind but under the disguise of the other.

Among things not generally known is the official name of that much-abused vehicle popularly designated the "four-wholer" or "growler." It appears that its correct appellation is a Clarence, and that the occupant is the growler.

"NODDING" in church is sleeping clear through the entire sermon, but without snoring, and with the head bowed on the paw in front, as though in prayer. Nobody in the whole church, by the way, thinks it remotely resembles the attitude of prayer, except the person who is "noddling."

No Turk will enter a sitting-room with dirty shoes. The upper classes wear tight-fitting shoes, with gold shoes over them. The latter, which receive all the dirt and dust, are left outside the door. The Turk never washes in dirty water. Water is poured over his hands, so that when polluted it runs away.

In some parts of Kent, when a newly-married couple leave the church, the friends strew the pathway, not with flowers, but with emblems of the bridegroom's calling, thus: carpenters walk on shavings, butchers on the skins of slaughtered sheep, shoemakers are honoured with leather parings, paperhangers with slips of paper, blacksmiths with old iron and rusty nails, and so on.

"REFRACTION," said the Professor, "always changes the apparent place or position of an object, so that we seem to see the object where it is not. The mirage is a striking phenomenon of refraction. A man returning home from his club, wearied with his labours as a committee man, on essaying to enter his house at 2.30 a.m., frequently sees the keyhole in the middle of the door. This is refraction. Then, when he draws out his latch-key, he will observe that it is twisted in the form of a spiral staircase, and has a handle across the end. This is mirage. When he finally falls through the open door, which has not been closed at all, and marches upstairs to his room, he is dismayed to see two, and sometimes three wives sitting unsteadily in the room, while two and sometimes three beds revolve slowly around them. This is double refraction."

What is the strictly stylish breed of dogs continues an interesting topic of discussion in fashionable circles. Girls express their partiality for the terrier families, while the men bestow their favours upon the bogo setters and mastiffs. The French poodle is a leading favourite with both sexes, and is a dog gifted with remarkable intelligence. When the poodle has an ultra-fashionable master or mistress, that fact is testified in America by the solid silver bracelet which he wears on his left forepaw. He is a dainty little creature, and lifts each paw as he trots along with amusing precision and delicacy. Very aristocratic, though they do not look it, are the bull terriers, and much the same can be said of clear white brindle dogs. To be quite en règle, the latter should have a patch of darker-coloured hair directly over one eye, which gives the dog a peculiarly rakish appearance. Flemish terriers are a recent importation. They have coal-black bodies, legs like black and tan terriers, foxy-looking heads, with sharp pointed noses and small, erect ears, and they have no tails.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**WILD ROSE.**—We do not know the name.  
**BEILINDA BISTY.**—Ask any good hairdresser.  
**GILLIAN.**—A leaden comb is often used to darken the hair.  
**MONA.**—All paints are more or less injurious to the skin.  
**SEBASTIAN.**—Apply to a solicitor; we never give legal advice.  
**YUM YUM.**—The receipts you ask for are trade matters.  
**PUSBY.**—Ladies are always greeted first in a mixed company.  
**TIMOTHY.**—Damascus is said to be the oldest city in the world.  
**TWO FLOWERS.**—The snowdrop signifies hope; crocus, impatience.  
**HOB.**—We never give trade addresses in the columns of the READER.  
**A. C. R.**—It is a trade matter. We cannot give you the information.  
**WILD ROSE.**—It is against our rule to answer any letter through the post.  
**MARJORIE.**—The words are French, and mean "Evil to him that evil thinks."  
**T. T.**—We have not met with any receipt for making the articles you mention.  
**PRETTY LOUISE.**—1. You are very tall for a young lady. 2. The origin of the name is lost.  
**HILDA.**—1. The paper is rather vulgar reading for a young lady. 2. You write a very pretty hand.  
**ARNOLD.**—Such a proceeding would be altogether against our rules; we never do anything of the sort.  
**A. C. D.**—We have no knowledge of the origin of the name; it is probably a corruption of something else.  
**EMERALDA.**—Do not try to make your waist any smaller; the idiotic fashion of tight-lacing is going out.  
**BONNY JEAN.**—Almost any of the London dailies will answer your purpose; the *Daily Telegraph* is as good as any.  
**A PARENT IN TROUBLE.**—If the young woman can prove her claim, the father of the child can be made to pay.  
**TEMA.**—The Tay Bridge was swept away on the 28th of December, 1879, at about a quarter past seven o'clock in the evening.  
**T. W. A.**—The duties of a nursery governess vary very much in different families; it is impossible for us to define them exactly.  
**GERTRUDE.**—There would appear to be no objection to your pleasing yourself about the dancing if your father has no scruples about it.  
**TOMMIE TUCKER.**—Tee was brought to Europe in the year 1610 by the Dutch. There is no record of its use in England prior to the year 1687.  
**LADY JANE.**—Any of the ladies or gentlemen who advertise in the daily papers for dramatic pupils will give you all the information you want.  
**BRIDEWIFE.**—1. The bride provides her own costume. The bridegroom generally makes the bridesmaids a present each. 2. The writing is very neat.  
**EMED.**—All the numbers of the story you inquire about are in print, and can be had on application to the publisher of the *Family Reader* at the office.  
**ROSA.**—We thank you for your confidence in our powers of composition, but we can hardly spare the time to write verses for our correspondents.  
**BONNET BRANSTON.**—A lady does not thank a gentleman for asking her to dance with him; it is he who should thank her for giving him the pleasure.  
**UNA.**—We have no knowledge of the machines in question. We should doubt very much the wisdom of using any such means to improve any feature.  
**STAGE STRUCK.**—We know nothing of the lady's private affairs; we are content to admire her talent on the stage; the public has nothing to do with the rest of her life.  
**TOBY.**—A dog license is not transferable; if you lose your dog during the year and get another, the same license holds good; a new one must be taken out on the 1st of January.  
**MADCAP.**—Purchase a copy of the paper and write to the editor at the place where it is published. You will find the address at the bottom of the last page on the right hand side.  
**J. A. L.**—Certainly there was a "Siege of Vienna"; it was besieged by the Turks in the year 1688. John Sobieski, then King of Poland, did the Austrians good service in repelling the enemy.  
**BOUNCING B.**—The piano may be learned to a certain extent without a teacher, but you will find instruction necessary as you go on, unless you have a thorough knowledge of music in theory.  
**ALMIDA.**—You had better go to a good dentist and take his advice. It would be well to wait till you have done growing to have your teeth renewed. As you grow so will your mouth in a slight degree.

**SAMBO.**—The bull-rush means indifference or docility; being dry does not alter the signification that we are aware of. A group of dried handsome bullrushes is a good ornament for a corner of a room.

**ONE IN TROUBLE.**—The only way you can communicate with your children is through some mutual friend. If you have left your husband of your own accord, he can prevent you having any communication with them.

**MARIA.**—You should never attempt to "dry up your blood"—whatever you mean by such an expression—without proper advice as to your proceedings. Alum eating is a nasty habit, as is the devouring of stale tea leaves.

**ALCO.**—We should not advise you to smoke so early. Boys do smoke in these advanced days, but it is not a good habit for them to form. Tobacco, like many other things, is harmless when used judiciously, but a bad thing taken to excess.

**NAOMI.**—The only sure way is to pay the utmost attention to cleanliness both of the skin and clothes. You had better ask the advice of a medical man. The mischief may arise from a bad state of health, in which case nothing but prompt treatment will be of any use.

**DOLLY.**—Try taking oatmeal porridge for breakfast if you can eat it; it is very fattening. Cocoa is also beneficial in a case like yours. Perhaps you are constitutionally thin. There are many persons whose nothing will fatten. We thank you for your good wishes and cordially reciprocate them.

**CORA.**—You should not have any secrets from your mother, or encourage any young man who objects to your parents knowing of your meetings. Girls can never be too careful of their conduct, and a very little gossip about your being "out after dark," &c. will go far to ruin your reputation.

## "NEXT TO HAND."

We'd like to lecture, you and I,  
 And throw the banner wide;  
 Reform's determined battle-cry  
 We'd shout on every side.  
 But while our voices strongly blend  
 In cause of poor oppressed,  
 I wonder is our home, my friend,  
 By soul and justice blessed.

"We need a modern hospital,"  
 Is said in rousing tone;  
 A charitable festival  
 Must lay the corner-stone.  
 So taken are we with the plan,  
 We can't find time, all day,  
 To step across and see the man  
 Who's dying o'er the way!

In getting up the faney ball  
 To aid the starving poor,  
 No time have we to heed at all  
 The beggar at the door.  
 A "Children's Refuge" must be bought  
 By some good Christian guild.  
 To work we go—no time for thought  
 Of Bridget's crippled child!

Oh, let us aid the cause, my friend—  
 Help all God's helpless poor.  
 Charity *does* help, but should not end  
 Just here within our door.  
 But, oh, let's *start* begin upon  
 The dull and homely band  
 Of duties that each rising sun  
 Shows us so close to hand!

C. T.

**PHYLIS.**—Engagement rings are very much a matter of taste. The fashion of having what Shakespeare calls a "poxy" on them has rather revived of late. Rings are to be bought with mottoes on them, but a "Mispah" ring answers every purpose, and the inscription is telling, with the merit of being only one word.

**DEEP ANXIETY.**—Your letter is very vague; you do not even say what war you refer to, or in what part of the world the action took place. If you did not give the authorities at the War Office any more data to go upon than you have given us, it is not surprising that they could not give you the information you desire.

**PHILIPPA.**—All sorts of dyes are advertised, and the one you mention is considered about the best. But home dyeing in delicate colours is seldom very successful. If your dress is a good one, and you want it a pale pink, we should advise you to take it to a good dyer and have it properly done; it will be worth the cost.

**UNHAPPY JOE.**—The only way to undo the mischief made by evil tongues is to live the scandal down; if there is not truth in what your enemies say, the lie will soon be forgotten. Your master will not listen to any such stories if he has found your character uniformly good; he will judge you by what you are, not by what other people say of you.

**R. O. B.**—You will get all the information you require by going or writing to the Emigration Inquiry Office, Broadway, Westminster. The office has been opened to answer in the fullest manner all inquiries about the colonies, and to give information to intending emigrants. If you are in the country send a stamp for a reply, and state which colony you wish to go to, and you will be most courteously answered. Do not apply to any person calling himself an agent. You may spend a good deal of money and get no nearer to what you want to know. The office whose address we have quoted is established by Government for the purpose set forth.

**LAURA.**—There is nothing improper in any girl receiving the attentions of a gentleman if he is an honourable person and intends to marry her. Under the circumstances you mention it would be wise for you to be very careful and consult your friends before receiving presents from a man who appears to be a little out of your own sphere.

**SAGE.**—Your notions of the duties of an editor must be rather curious. It is no part of our business to help out an examination or to decide disputed questions that are of no possible interest to the rest of our readers. Even if we had the time to consider your very long list, we might not satisfy you. Opinions differ as to who the "greatest man" were.

**W. I. T. D.**—Nothing can be done except by patience and perseverance; the open air is the best place for practising deliberate speaking. Do not give in because the cure seems slow in beginning; it may take you months to master the very commencement of it, but if there is no imperfection in the muscles of your mouth and throat it will come in time.

**N. O. D.**—We should be very happy to give you any advice in our power, but it is difficult to counsel a young lady who announces herself in love with two gentlemen at the same time. Make up your mind which of the two you mean to encourage, and have nothing to do with the other one afterwards; you are not acting honestly by either of them at present.

**A LOVER OF ROMANCE.**—You are very foolish to set up your own will against that of your parents. Doubtless they have good reasons for what they do, and if they consider works of fiction unsuitable for you to read, you should give up the habit. A fascinating novel is very nice, but the knowledge that you are doing your duty and pleasing your parents is much nicer.

**A. S. L.**—There is no reason why a girl should not be happy as a soldier's wife. The life in barracks is very different from a workman's life outside; everything goes by rule, and the surroundings are rough; but there is no doubt that a young woman, willing to work, and cleanly and industrious in her habits, may make a comfortable home for herself even in a private soldier's quarters. A good deal in the way of furniture is provided; and if the pay is small, there is no rent to pay.

**HOUSEWIFE.**—Picklets are not easily made by those who are not used to the work, and require a girl to bake them on. The following is the simplest receipt we have for them: One pound of flour, one egg, one ounce of butter. Rub the butter into the flour, adding a pinch of salt. Put the flour into a bowl, make a hole in the middle, and pour into it about a quarter of an ounce of German yeast dissolved in a tablespoonful of lukewarm water; add the egg, well beaten, stir well together, and take as much warm milk as will make the whole into a stiff batter; beat well for a few minutes. Heat the griddle over a clear fire, melt a little butter on it, and pour into it a cupful of the batter. When one side is done, turn the cake and bake the other. Serve hot and well buttered.

**C. H.**—We can only help you to the titles of three of Richard Lovelace's poems—"Orpheus to the Beasts," "To Lucrecia, on Going to the Wars," in which the much quoted lines occur:—

"I could not love thee, dear, so much

Loved I not honour more."

and "To Althea, from Prison," in which are the well-known lines:—

"Stone walls do not a prison make,

Nor iron bars a cage."

Perhaps the lines may help you in your search for the book. We have heard of the poem you mention, but have no idea where it is to be found.

**SOUTH AFRICA.**—1. We should be very glad indeed to give you the assistance you require, but to do so properly would take up far more space than we have at our command. Judging from your letter, you express yourself in writing very well. You will do well to get a good grammar and study it; you will find everything you want in its pages. You need not be afraid to write to any one as far as your writing and composition are concerned. 2. In England there would be no slur upon you in consequence of the coloured blood in your veins. If a man marries a woman honourably and according to the laws of the land, there is no disgrace in the fact of her being coloured. Many coloured men have made their mark in the world, and you may do so too. 3. We can hardly tell you what books to select for a course of study, not knowing your particular bent. Your best plan will be to put yourself under a good teacher and get him to select for you.

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††† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

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